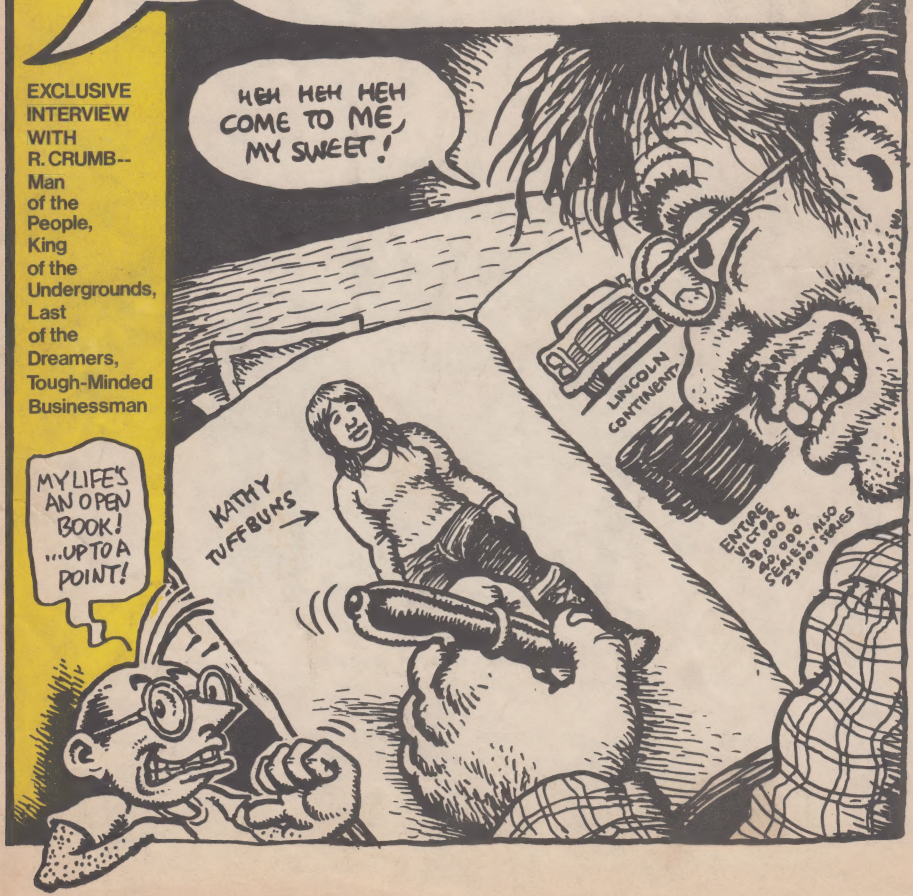
WHY I'M ON STRIKE AGAINST NATIONAL, BY NEAL ADAMS
SUPERHEIST! THE GREAT COMIC ART RIP-OFF

INSIDE COMICS

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 1
SPRING 1974
$1

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH R. CRUMB--Man of the People, King of the Undergrounds, Last of the Dreamers, Tough-Minded Businessman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by Joe Brancatelli
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What's a Nice Counter-Culture Visionary Like Robert Crumb Doing on a Secluded Farm in California?
by Keith Green
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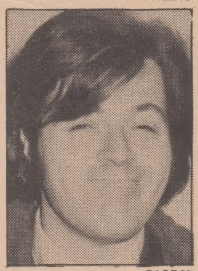
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THE AUTHORITATIVE PRICE GUIDE 1974 EDITION

We are proud to announce the 1974 edition of THE SFCA GUIDE. In this handy sized (6 x 8¾) book you'll find comics from 1933 to the present listed with their current market value (in 3 categories—good, very good, and mint). The SFCA GUIDE has many new and improved features, which are listed below, but the most important aspect of any price guide, is the section listing market values. But, even more important is how those values were arrived at. When determining the value of each comic, we made note of what other price guides listed, this was checked against many, many ads (**both** fans and dealers), we then took into account what comics are selling for at various conventions (we attend several each year, not just New York), and then this was tempered with our own knowledge and experience. The SFCA, in the past 13 years, has published more comic-oriented fan magazines, including the RBCC (fandom's oldest, regularly published article/adzine), than **anyone**. Therefore, we have been, and are, right on top of trends, price fluctuations, supply, demand, etc. While our pricing method is more painstaking and time consuming than just taking a few dealer lists and averaging out their prices (which doesn't give a true picture anyway), we felt (based on our 13 years of experience) this method was more realistic and accurate.

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In this edition we've included over 40 full page comic cover reproductions, mostly of golden age comics, all beautifully half toned. You'll find no "postage stamp" sized cover repros in the SFCA GUIDE.

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This is yet another new feature. With it, you can keep a complete, up to the minute, record of your entire collection (along with the condition of each book) right in the back of your guide. To repeat, you have the SFCA GUIDE and a complete inventory of your collection instantly at your fingertips, all in one handy pcoket sized book. What could be more convenient?

IBM TYPED
In an effort to make the SFCA GUIDE easier to read, we had it typed completely with a brand new IBM electric typewriter. You'll also find that the guide section has been "uncluttered" and is much easier and quicker to use.

IMPROVED BINDING
We had originally planned to use squared-binding, but many fans informed us that books with square binding tend to fall apart with constant use. Therefore, we decided on wrap-around binding and we discovered an additional advantage. Not only will the pages not fall out, but you'll find the pages are much easier to turn and to hold open, without fear of breaking the spine.

ARTISTS CHECKLISTS
In the SFCA GUIDE you'll find 4 individual checklists of the comic books with artwork by Frank Frazetta, Basil Wolverton, Wally Wood, and Al Williamson. You do not have to search page after page of the guide section to find out which comic has art by which artist. These checklists are in a separate section for quick and easy reference. This also helped us to "unclutter" the guide section.

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We offer generous discounts on quantity orders. And you can order as few as 10 copies and still qualify for reduced prices. Write us for complete details.

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All those ordering will receive a free copy of our new catalog listing hundreds of comic fanzines, posters, art portfolios, etc. for sale.

LETTERS

[Editor's note]— Although this is the first issue of INSIDE COMICS, we are printing comments on articles written for INSIDE COMIX, this magazine's forerunner. INSIDE COMIX was included in two fan adzines, THE BUYER'S GUIDE and ROCKET'S BLAST-COMICOLLECTOR.

In future issues, this column will be devoted to readers' comments on articles in previous issues, readers' feelings about the industry and fandom in general and whatever else is within the scope of INSIDE COMICS.

C.C. Beck and SHAZAM!

To the editor...

I didn't ever really want control over Captain Marvel. I just want somebody in control who will get decent stories. Unfortunately, Wendell Crowley is dead and there'll never be another editor like he was.

Julius Schwartz has said that I could illustrate any story that I write myself, so I'm writing some with the very able assistance of Nelson Bridwell, as Schwartz doesn't seem to want to bother with me. Perhaps things will work out, perhaps not. I have been reading some of the old stories that Bridwell has sent me and I am amazed at how beautifully written they were. I seldom changed anything, only adding a few touches here and there which editors and writers usually cheered about.

At DC, however, the stories were not good and contained so much over-done junk that I could not bring myself to the point of putting them into pictures.

I do not consider myself an expert on Captain Marvel; the fans told me how silly he was getting to be. As to his being out of date in the modern world—he was out of date when he first appeared in 1940. Superman was even then drawn realistically and written without humor. Captain Marvel was light-hearted and drawn in comic style. The stories were not comical; many of them were dead serious! The cartoon style put them over, because if they'd been drawn realistically, they would have been as deadly and awful-looking as all the other books then on the stands.

The reason I'd like a shop is that other men contribute very much in the way of special knowledge, particular skills and the like. When I have to do everything myself, I'm like a one-man band—kind of fun to watch but not making very good music. And when I have lousy music to play—phooey!

To make things clear, here's what I believe:

1) a good story is what the reader wants.

2) The artist must illustrate the story—bring it to life—make it move and breathe.

3) Anybody can differentiate between a good story and a bad one. Even a child who has to have things read to him. You don't need years of experience as Schwartz claims.

In contrast, here's what comic publishers (including Fawcett) seem to believe:

1) Only kids and morons buy comics, so who cares what goes into them?

2) Pay very low rates for stories and art; keep everyone under control and never let any of the help open their mouths.

3) As all comics are equally junk, superior production and distribution will beat out all competitors. Never listen to fans or readers, only to newsdealers and accountants. They know what goes—everyone else is nothing.

C.C. Beck
Miami, Florida
October 18, 1973

C.C. Beck is the former artist of National's SHAZAM!, and was the long-time head artist when Fawcett produced the Captain Marvel adventures.

To the editor...

Congratulations are in order for Joe Brancatelli's superb article, "Shazam! The Battle for Captain Marvel." While the other fan magazines were reporting wild speculations, half-truths and heart-felt outrages, and the news fanzines were producing whatever Carmine Infantino wanted them to, Brancatelli came across with an incisive and objective piece.

It's good to see that solid reporting, relying on facts and not personal prejudices and feelings, is finally coming into vogue in comic book fandom.

James Quinlin
Pocatello, Idaho
November 7, 1973

To the editor...

Joe Brancatelli is to be congratulated for his superlative article on the recent unfortunate flap concerning DC's **SHAZAM!** comic book.

I'm grateful to Brancatelli for bringing out both sides in this piece because up until his article, all fandom was getting was bits and fragments. It's unfortunate, however, that the creators don't see eye to eye. It seems that the crisis could and should have been avoided by better communications.

Perhaps what National needs is Joe Brancatelli to run interference between themselves and their writers and artists.

Fred Malfa
Cleveland, Ohio
October 30, 1973

Joe Brancatelli replies: Me? In comic books? I'm crazy. But I'm not a lunatic. The comic book companies made their own boiling cauldron of dissent. Let them stew in their own juices. Perhaps they'll learn that they are dealing with people. Editors and writers and artists are people, and until the comic companies learn that, misunderstandings between creative people will cause unfortunate incidents.

The Convention Nobody Saw

To the editor...

Just a note written on the spur of the moment. I liked very much the literary style in which Joe Brancatelli wrote "The Convention Nobody Saw" in **THE BUYER'S GUIDE.** That is writing that comes across and is moving.

It made me think that he described a much wider phenomenon, for in other fields—including my own field of psychiatry—very similar things are going on. It is a general hardening.

Fredric Wertham, M.D.
Kempton, Pennsylvania
November 14, 1973

Dr. Wertham is a world renown psychiatrist who has written two books about comic books and fandom—SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT and THE WORLD OF FANZINES. The latter is reviewed in this issue by Mark Evanier.

To the editor...

It's about time that Joe Brancatelli stops knocking comic collecting in general and conventions in particular. He tears down one of the basic tenants of conventions: buying and selling. All fans want to buy and sell. His claim that the fans are victims of dealers are absurd. The rising price of everything we eat, wear and use extends also to comic books' prices. Brancatelli should know that.

Brancatelli is nothing more than a malcontent. If he doesn't like comic book fandom, let him get out. We would all profit, I think. We can do without another Pete Hamill-type columnist.

Lawrence Sinecure
Dayton, Ohio
November 1, 1973

To the editor...

By and large, the most impressive feature of **INSIDE COMIX 2** was Joe Brancatelli's "The Convention Nobody Saw." Regardless of the title, I did see that convention. I've seen so many like it, in fact, that I've just about given up

with regard to the organized comic scene and establishment. And this is after nearly 25 years of collecting.

I was particularly impressed by the way in which Brancatelli leveled his criticism at dealers, fans and pros. There are a lot of repulsive traits on all of these levels ... but the most common manifestation of the unwholesomeness that pervades the lot is a kind of aggressive insensitivity, a vulgar semi-sadism of persons so small that their entire horizon is bounded by the size of a comic book page. It is simply the big frog in the small pond syndrome carried to a regrettable conclusion.

For some time now, I have been tempted to write at length concerning the issues discussed in Brancatelli's article. He saved me the trouble.

I think he has written the ultimate condemnation. It remains that I would seriously like to read about alternatives to the current situation.

John Witek
Elmhurst, New York
November 3, 1973

To the editor...

I am seriously, deeply hurt by the scathing truth of "The Convention Nobody Saw." It's apparent now that this wonderful fantasy world I escaped to just a few short years ago has truly been touched, corrupted and ruined by some insidious farce.

The bubbling enthusiasm, the sheer glee of going to my first convention has been replaced by a sense of going through the motions. It was not a comics fandom I saw in this fittingly depressing hotel, just an ugly, pathetic money-grubbing mob of pretenders. They have finally abandonned the art for the business.

I sat outside that National room, too. For hours. Me, my sickly portfolio, and a few others like myself—all with a distinct lack of talent, but with a lot of desire. Perhaps with more love for the medium than those inside could ever have known. They never even looked at us. Just a head at the door and a "wait a little while longer, kids" to keep us hanging.

I got tired of waiting, so I left. Bitterly disappointed, yes. Yet I thought that if these were the people I so envied, I so much wanted to become a part of ... maybe I was better off not becoming one of them in their tiny, warped little world.

Larry Trepel
Tenafly, New Jersey
October 21, 1973

To the editor...

I have never done this before. I have never read an article, and immediately upon reading the last word, ran to my typewriter to write its author. This is the first time.

Joe Brancatelli's article, "The Convention Nobody Saw," is probably the best commentary on the comics scene I have ever read. It transcends the standard, programmed, blind hero-worshipping garbage that spews forth from most comics-related publications. It looks at our "hobby" stripped to the bone, devoid of sugar-coating, and for the first time talks about something that has only been hinted at by others in the past.

At the basis of our love for comics, I hope, lies a child-like fantasy. Yeah, sure, you can call it "art" until you are blue in the face, but it boils down to this: that we know what the real world smells like, and our love for comics is a statement against that world; a small. colorful hope that part of us can remain unblemished.

Perhaps that hope has finally been snuffed out. Brancatelli put in concrete terms what I smelled at this summer's con; that what had happened to the Disney organization 15 years ago has finally spread to the entire field—a realization of "priorities" (greed before admiration) and a worldly sense of pragmatism (efficiency before friendship).

At the very first comic convention I attended, my stunned amazement gave way to a small glimmer: we are all together here; there is a possibility we can all be united here under one banner; and for one brief moment in our lives, drop defenses and enjoy a companionship in fantasy. I walked away from the 1973 convention thinking that I had grown too old for such sport. But perhaps I had not grown old enough...

Tom Hammond
North Syracuse, New York
November 2, 1973

The Inevitable Letter from Roy

To the editor...

Unfortunately, not only is the title of **INSIDE COMIX** woefully, almost criminally misleading (since by no stretch of anyone's imagination but his own is Joe Brancatelli inside comics or comix), but his tone is so blatantly anti-Marvel that only his immediate family or the inmates of a mental institution or a desperately cynical comics fandom could consider him as the "objective" journalist which Jim Warren (who was virtually sainted in the first issue, no wonder) calls him.

Joe, it appears, can read little better than he can assimilate information, or he would have realized that what I always said I liked about **COMIC FANDOM MONTHLY** was the concept, not particularly the execution. I kept hoping he'd mature, but instead he's gone the other direction and substituted jaundice for prudence. How else could he so grossly misrepresent the **THOR** episode (which has only the vaguest kernel of truth—somethig like extrapolating the history of the American West from an issue of **RAWHIDE KID**), or the circumstances (unknown to him, and even to most of my assistants) that led to the demise of **SAVAGE TALES**. In the latter demise, incidentally, it was a decision I concurred in readily, albeit sadly, and—while Stan and I disagreed on various aspects of the magazine, its cover, etc.—Joe obviously is not in on any of the economic and boringly non-personal reasons for the mag's cancellation. I won't bother to enlighten him, however, since he seems to be much happier when he simply makes up his information wholesale.

Naturally, we'd like a retraction, since Brancatelli is full of what I shall politely term manure. However, there'll be no threat of lawsuits; he isn't worth it. And, if it believes the crap he prints, neither is comics fandom.

We pros are far from perfect, and comics distribution is indeed a jumble.

But Joe Brancatelli is an out-and-out mess, and irresponsible besides. Freedom of the press, in his case, merely means the chance to build a reputation rumor-mongering the way that most comics fans have been too proud and too honest to do up till now.

He should be ashamed of himself.

Roy Thomas
New York, New York
October 16, 1973

Roy Thomas is editor of the Marvel Comics Group. He is also the editor and publisher of ALTER EGO.

Joe Brancatelli replies: It increasingly becomes an honor to be disliked by Roy Thomas. His inane and outright false comments would be laughable, if they weren't so pathetic.

We've already shown Roy Thomas for what he is in a recent issue of THE BUYER'S GUIDE. How the editor of a comic group can be trusted to give embarrassing information about his own company is beyond credibility.

We find it interesting that Roy declines to "enlighten" myself and the readers to his side of the facts. Roy doesn't have a side, unless he manufactures one.

We stand by our stories, every word of them. Thomas has no recourse but to deny them. But he can't prove his denials.

But as I said, Thomas has already been shown for what he is. □

INSIDE COMICS accepts letters on anything related to the comic art field. Address all mail to: INSIDE COMICS Letters, 11 West 17th Street, New York, New York 10011.

THE COMIC REPORT

All for One and One for None

The news that Marvel would raise the price of their 32 page comic books from 20 to 25 cents came as no surprise. Observers were equally underwhelmed when Archie and Charlton made similar price announcements.

Shortly after Marvel made the price change, however, they reportedly telephoned National publisher Carmine Infantino. A Marvel assistant editor, who asked that his name not be used, charged that Marvel wanted Infantino to raise National's 32 page line to 25 cents, too.

"As soon as they made the decision, the big guys were on the phone to Carmine," he said. "They pleaded with him to raise the prices, but he refused. In any other business, it probably would have been a clear cut attempt at price fixing."

A National editor—who also asked his name not be mentioned, because talking to **INSIDE COMICS** "could get me fired"—confirmed the story. He said Infantino was "jumping for joy" when he was told Marvel was raising their prices.

We tried to contact both Roy Thomas and Stan Lee for comment, but a Marvel secretary said that neither would be able "to talk to you for a couple of weeks. They're very busy." She declined to give her name.

When we tried to reach Infantino, a National secretary, who also declined to identify herself, said that Infantino "had nothing to say."

According to the Marvel assistant editor, Infantino has "waited several years" to turn down a Marvel price change request. "After Marty Goodman [then Marvel publisher] fucked him a couple of years ago, Carmine was left holding the bag. I guess this is his way of getting back at us."

(In 1971, both National and Marvel converted their books to 48 pages for 25 cents. After two months, however, Marvel abruptly returned to the 32 page format. National was forced to do likewise several months later.)

The National editor said that Infantino had "flatly rejected" Marvel's proposal. "Carmine's no dummy. We've got things in our favor now. We've got a varied line of books at different prices. Marvel's all at one price and size—and we have a line that's cheaper but offering the same thing."

He also said that National "will probably be phasing out our 32 page line by the end of the year.

"The next couple of months are going to be tough on Marvel," he said, "especially if we keep the 20 cent books around for a long time. They'll just have to develop some new formats or they're going to be in deep trouble."

National markets their 32 page books at 20 cents; they also have 100 page books for 60 cents and a line of large, $1.00 color comics. On the other hand, Marvel has only the 32 page line, at the 25 cent price tag. Marvel has said that they will be issuing experimental books all during 1974. They also have a line of non-competitive black and white comics at 75 cents.

Many of Marvel's free-lancers were dismayed by Marvel's price rise. One Marvel free-lance artist we contacted said that Marvel's office was "like a morgue." A writer said that "everyone is walking around in a daze."

One Marvel staffer was equally unhappy, but he said that "Marvel had no choice. Everyone, including Stan and Roy and Ryan [John Ryan, circulation manager] knows the quarter book won't sell. But what the hell was Stan going to do? The production department couldn't have possibly handled a jump to 100 pagers on such short notice. We had no choice."

No one has denied the need for a price realignment in the comics. Production costs, like the economy in general, had skyrocketed. Paper prices, which have increased about 50 per cent over the last year, will be going up again. The energy crisis, with its attending gasoline shortage, has spiraled the price of distribution. A price adjustment was inevitable.

Comics On Film

Starting this June, you'll be able to purchase comic strips and comic books on 35 mm microfilm.

The microfilming project was announced by AMS Press, Inc. of New York who have recently completed filming 99 titles of comic books and strips onto 187 reels of microfilm.

Included in the filming is most of King Feature Syndicate's library and 72 Marvel comic books. All the material is printed in black and white, except for the Marvel comics and Hal Foster's **PRINCE VALIANT**, which are available both in black and white and in color.

Prices range from $25 for a set of **FELIX THE CAT** or **KRAZY KAT** Sunday pages to $525 for a black and white set of Marvel comics. A complete set of films, containing 27 King strips and the 72 Marvel books, costs $3950. If you want the set with the Marvel books and **PRINCE VALIANT** strip in color, the price jumps to $4340.

Among the other popular strips available on microfilm are **FLASH GORDON** (by Alex Raymond, Al Williamson and Dan Barry), **JUNGLE JIM**, **CISCO KID**, **POPEYE** (by Elzie Segar and Bud Sagendorf), and **TARZAN** (by Russ Manning, Burne Hogarth and Hal Foster). Among the Marvel comics microfilmed are **SPIDER-MAN**, **FANTASTIC FOUR**, **CONAN**, and most of their other hero titles.

To publicize the project, AMS Press commissioned noted magazine illustrator Frank Mell to draw a full color promotional poster. Mell, whose work has appeared in **McCALL'S**, **NEW YORK**, **PENTHOUSE**, **COSMOPOLITAN** and others, was ecstatic over the project.

"As the newsprint rots, I think that this [microfilming] is an obvious answer to the question of how to preserve these great works of art. If AMS includes a small bottle of 'comic book smell' the package would be complete."

The reverse side of Mell's poster contains an introduction by Marvel publisher Stan Lee and all ordering information. The poster lists all available titles and their dates and prices.

If Ted Kennedy drove a Volkswagen, he'd be President today.
In floods.
The way our body is built, we'd be surprised if it didn't.
The sheet of flat steel that goes underneath every Volkswagen keeps out water, as well as dirt and salt and other nasty things that can eat away at the underside of a car. So it's watertight at the bottom.
And everybody knows it's easier to shut the door on a Volkswagen after you've rolled down the window a little. That proves it's practically airtight on top.
If it was a boat, we could call it the Water Bug.
But it's not a boat, it's a car.
And, like Mary Jo Kopechne, it's only 99 and 44/100 percent pure.
So it won't stay afloat forever. Just long enough.
Poor Teddy.
It he'd been smart enough to buy a Volkswagen, he never would have gotten into that water.

Socci Strikes Again

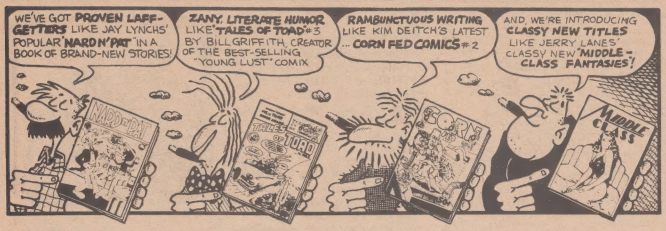
In their haste to swipe newspaper accounts of the lawsuit between the **NATIONAL LAMPOON** and Volkswagen of America, none of the news fanzines mentioned the fact that the ad lampoon in question was written by Phil Socci, a New York comic book fan.

We talked to Socci, who is a staffer at both the Creation and New York Comic Art conventions, several days after the lawsuit was announced and he was cheerful. "I've been a nationally published author for a whole two weeks," he said, "and already I'm involved in my first lawsuit. It's got to be some kind of record, you know?"

The suit was eventually settled out of court, with the **LAMPOON** agreeing to pull copies of **THE NATIONAL LAMPOON ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HUMOR**, which carried the ad, off the newsstand two days before they were originally scheduled for removal. They also agreed to retract the fake advertisement in a future issue of **NATIONAL LAMPOON**.

Socci said he will continue to submit to the **LAMPOON**. "I took one new idea to Henry Beard [the editor], and he dug it, but it was even weirder than the VW ad, so we're not gonna use it."

From a comic book fan, of course, none of this is the slightest bit unusual.


WE'VE GOT PROVEN LAFF-GETTERS LIKE JAY LYNCHS' POPULAR 'NARD N' PAT' IN A BOOK OF BRAND-NEW STORIES!
ZANY, LITERATE HUMOR LIKE 'TALES OF TOAD' #3 BY BILL GRIFFITH, CREATOR OF THE BEST-SELLING 'YOUNG LUST' COMIX
RAMBUNCTUOUS WRITING LIKE KIM DEITCH'S LATEST ... CORN FED COMICS #2
AND, WE'RE INTRODUCING CLASSY NEW TITLES LIKE JERRY LANE'S CLASSY NEW 'MIDDLE-CLASS FANTASIES'!
NARD N' PAT
TALES OF TOAD
CORN FED COMICS
MIDDLE CLASS

The Underground Comix Underground

The underground comix industry, which has been acting more and more like the "overground" industry of late, has had its first revolution.

Artists Bill Griffith, Jay Lynch, Kim Deitch, and Jerry Lane have all split from the established overground companies and have helped found their own organization the "Cartoonists Co-op Press."

The Co-op's first four releases—Griffith's **TALES OF THE TOAD #3**, Lynch's **NARD AND PAT**, Deitch's **CORNFED COMICS #2** and newcomer Lane's **MIDDLE CLASS FANTASIES**—should be published by the time you read this.

"At the moment, the Co-op exists solely to market these four books," Bill Griffith said. "It's a self-sustaining cooperative of underground cartoonists. We're only interested in keeping undergrounds quality-oriented.

The group was formed late last year under the influence of artists Roger Brand, Art Spiegleman and Griffith. Dissatisfied with the production of the current underground companies, they set up the cooperative.

"When things were going especially bad last summer," said Griffith, "many of the good underground artists were in serious financial trouble. None of the underground companies wanted to publish anything new."

(The Supreme Court declared last June 22nd that "prevailing community standards" would determine the local boundaries of obscenity.)

"Because of the virtual shutdown," Griffith said, "we simply went out and formed a new organization. We're really not a profit making outfit, though. Our main interest is in being a clearing house for the good artists. If an artist has a backer for a new book, and we like their work, we'll offer them the use of the cooperative's seal. We'll also help them market the books."

Griffith said he hoped this system will reduce the number of "bad" undergrounds. The market, he said, is glutted with poor titles, and only quality titles will sell now.

Keith Green, who recently resigned from Last Gasp-Eco Funnies, is running the marketing for the Co-op.

"We're out for good, enjoyable, sellable undergrounds," he said. "Because the cooperative is artist-oriented, he gets three times the royalties he'd normally get. He also won't get any shit from the publishers. We think it's going to be the first good thing to happen to undergrounds in years."

Each of the first four books will sell for 50¢ per copy (plus 15¢ for postage and handling), or four books for $2.00. They will be autographed by the artist on request.

Books can be ordered—either singularly or in bulk—from The Cartoonists Co-op, Post Office Box 40474, San Francisco, California 94110. All purchasers must be over 21.

BUNK is Right!

Magazines get strange mail, but few weirder than two letters that came to this office recently.

The first, postmarked August 23, 1973, was written by someone calling himself Jack Hearne of Seattle, Washington. The letter claimed that "DC Comics is about to resurrect the old original EC **MAD** and **PANIC** comics under a new title—**BUNK**—with Harvey Kurtzman to edit and head the writing staff and Bill Elder, Jack Davis and Wallace Wood to illustrate."

Our suspicions were immediately aroused when we checked the envelope: it was postmarked from Vancouver, Canada.

The second letter, postmarked November 23, 1973, was written by someone claiming to be P.J. Detter of Rockford, Illinois. This letter said that "Harvey Kurtzman informs me that he has made an arrangement with the National comics people to resurrect his original **MAD** and **PANIC** comics virtually intact under a single new title, **BUNK!** Kurtzman will edit and head the writing staff, and Bill Elder, Jack Davis and Wally Wood will again illustrate."

The slip-ups this time included the fact the envelope carried the same Vancouver postmark and a Canadian stamp. The letter writer claimed he received a letter from Kurtzman **dated** November 23, which happens to be the same day **his** letter was **postmarked**. Not to mention the fact that Harvey Kurtzman never edited **PANIC**.

As you might expect, both letters came from the same typewriter.

And, just in case, we checked with National. They said they never heard of a comic called **BUNK!**

Flim, Flam, FOOM

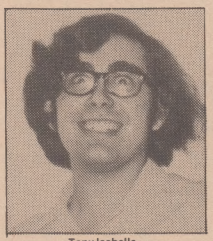
Tony Isabella will replace Jim Steranko and Supergraphics as producer of the Marvel fan club, "Friends of Ol' Marvel" (FOOM), according to a highly-placed Marvel source.

The switch-over will occur sometime after the publication of the fourth issue of **FOOM MAGAZINE**, according to the same source.

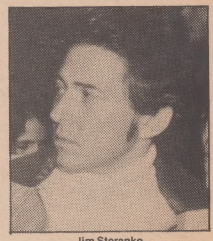
Jim Steranko denied the report in its entirety. "There's no truth to it at all," he said at the recent Creation Convention. "At least no one's told me. We've just printed up 25,000 membership cards and are issuing renewal material. We're just finishing up on the fourth issue of **FOOM**, too."

Tony Isabella did not confirm the report, but neither did he deny it. "The last time I walked to Roy [Thomas]," he said, "I was told that Jim Steranko was working on issue #4 of the magazine itself."

Isabella went on to say that "if



Tony Isabella



Jim Steranko

for any reason Jim left the club," he would be "in the running" for control of the organization.

Another Marvel staffer, who asked that his name not be used, confirmed the story. "Steranko's as good as gone right now," he said "Roy's not particularly tied to Steranko, and I know for a fact he's not overjoyed with **FOOM MAGAZINE**, either."

Thomas could not be reached for comment

Doug Murray, writing in the **CREATION CONVENTION PROGRAM BOOK**, reported that "FOOM was taken" from Steranko. He gave no source for his story, nor did he say when or why Steranko was lifted from the organization.

From the Folks Who Brought You PLOP #2

After we reported that Paul Levitz faked the letter column in **PLOP #2**, an angry reader sent us a note asking us to check into the letter column of **THE SHADOW #2**.

The reader, Lester Boutillier, was upset about two letters in particular. One was written by Mike Uslan, who was then working at National, and the other was written by Alan Kupperberg, who had just left the National pool. Both letters were highly complimentary to the comic.

In the letter column, O'Neil ran the letters without mention of their employment at National. He called Uslan an author and grad student; Kupperberg was identified as an artist.

Boutillier wrote O'Neil a steamy letter and O'Neil replied by telling Boutillier to "go impugn Dick Nixon's integrity."

We contacted O'Neil last November 19, and he was more than willing to talk about the incident.

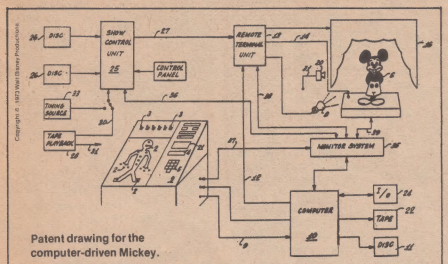
He said that he had "solicited letters from friends" because "there wasn't any mail in." But he claimed that he didn't "tell them what to write.

"I would have printed pans if they had written them," said O'Neil. "I can't prove that now, of course, but I don't think my rating on the ethics scale are that low."

Defending the use of the letters, he said he "wasn't going to write another self congratulatory editorial."

He also defended his characterization of the letter writers as author and artist. "These guys were what I said they were, even though I admit that they did work for National for a short time.

"Look," said O'Neil, "it's a little on the shady side, I'll admit, but not as shady as an editor running only complimentary letters when he had enough to justify running both sides."



Patent drawing for the computer-driven Mickey.

Mickey (The Computer) Mouse

They done modernized Mickey Mouse.

Walt Disney Productions now use data processing techniques to animate its life-sized, three dimensional figures used in the performance of Disney stage shows. The shows are given at both Disneyland and Walt Disney World and have computerized voices and music.

Seven inventors were granted the patent for the process last October. The computerized process makes it possible to program a show into the computer in about a half-hour. Under the old methods, it might take upwards of six weeks. The hardware and software can regulate head turns, eye blinks and mouth puckers, sneers and smiles at the same time.

The patent document itself comprises a record of sorts. It is over 400 pages long and has over 130 claims.

Everyone's Doing It

Bob Overstreet, what have you wrought?

When he published the first edition of the **COMIC BOOK PRICE GUIDE** in 1970, it was well received, but no one could anticipate the imitators it has spawned.

Overstreet's original book will publish its fourth edition this April in both hardback and softbound volumes. The 1974 book will feature expanded listings, a complete checklist to **CLASSIC COMICS** and **MARCH OF COMICS** titles and an article on comic conventions.

The first imitator, **TRUE MARKET GUIDE TO COMIC BOOK RETAIL VALUES**, will publish its second edition in February. Unlike the Overstreet guide, the **TRUE MARKET GUIDE** does not list all comics. Rather, it attempts to concentrate on "selected" comics.

Max Seeley, the **TRUE MARKET GUIDE** publisher, also announced the publication of the **TRUE MARKET MID-YEAR PRICE GUIDE SUPPLEMENT**, to be released in September.

The third guide presently available is **THE S.F.C.A. PRICE GUIDE**, now in its first edition. Published by G.B. Love, it includes a checklist of popular comic artists—Frank Frazetta, Basil Wolverton, Wally Wood and Al Williamson—a comic inventory and an article on "mail frauds."

The first professionally published guide will be released this spring by House of Collectibles of New York. Written by Hal L. Cohen, with the help of Ed Summer of Supersnipe Comic Shop, the **OFFICIAL GUIDE TO COMIC BOOKS** will contain 224 pages. It will list comics in fine and mint condition and will also include a "value scale to cover all issues in fair and good condition."

Also planned is **HENKEL'S POCKET COMIC PRICE GUIDE**. This book will not accept advertising, but will contain a paid directory to all the "prominent" fanzines and adzines in the United States and Canada.

All these new books led Chicago fan Jerry Saulstein to announce that he "will be publishing a comprehensive guide to all the comprehensive price guides now available.

"Remember," joked the 21-year-old Saulstein, "you can't tell a player without a scorecard; but then again, you can't tell the scorecards without another scorecard, either!"

Big Brother is Watching

A Los Angeles television station has banned the showing of the animated versions of **SUPERMAN, BATMAN** and **AQUAMAN** and 39 other programs. An additional 81 shows will be aired with a pre-broadcast warning to parents.

The agreement was reached October 1, 1973 between the National Association for Better Broadcasting (NABB) and Metromedia, Inc. owned station KTTV Channel 11 and will remain in force through October, 1977. The pact is a result of a two year challenge by the association to the operating license of the station. The suit was dropped after KTTV agreed to the NABB's terms.

"For the first time parents will have an opportunity to protect their children from excessive violence on commercial television," said Frank Orme, vice president of the NABB.

"The agreement is the most far-reaching and fundamental revision of policy related to violence ever undertaken in the United States."

Orme said that the agreement filed with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), calls for 42 violent television shows—including the three cartoon programs—to be banned starting this past January 1st.

The second policy requires

KTTV to present a prebroadcast announcement before 81 other programs. The warning will be introduced by a video slide carrying the words "Caution to Parents." Two notes will then be sounded on a soft chime, followed by an announcer's voice saying: "Parents, we wish to advise that because of violence or other possibly harmful elements, certain portions of the following program may not be suitable for young children."

Among the shows which will carry the warning are reruns of **THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.** and **THE UNTOUCHABLES.**

Orme said that the agreement between the station and NABB would be used as a pattern in attempting to get other stations to adopt "responsible policies in the presentation of programs viewed by children and youths."

He Never Learns

Paul Levitz, who we've scored for his biased reporting in **THE COMIC READER**, his conflicts-of-interest and his faking of a **PLOP** letter column, has been up to his old tricks.

Writing in National's King Size **HOUSE OF MYSTERY** magazine,

Paul Levitz

Levitz cracked that writer Steve Skeates "has become famous for filling in his income tax forms ten minutes before the deadline without using any records or receipts."

Skeates was incensed and took his complaint to The Academy of Comic Book Arts (ACBA). The Academy, according to the minutes of a recent Board of Governors meeting, noted "few laughs at this bit of Levitz levity," and were planning to have Skeates and Marvel scripter Tony Isabella compile a list of "similar things done by Levitz."

In any case, Skeates made his point with National. Levitz has offered to write a letter of apology and Skeates is writing a retraction which will be signed by **HOUSE OF MYSTERY** editor Joe Orlando. It will appear in a future issue of the color comic book.

The Best and Worst of Times

While Marvel was taking large ads in the 1973 Comic Art Convention program, claiming to be the largest selling comic group, it was simultaneously taking editorial cost-cutting measures.

Marvel now requires its artists to draw one page sideways in almost all of the color comic books. This will enable the page to be printed across two pages of a normal comic book, thus saving the cost of a page of artwork (about $65).

In their August/September 1973 issue of the **ACBA NEWSLETTER**, The Academy of Comic Book Arts (ACBA) noted that "members feel that this is a unique money-saving device for the publisher." But they also went on to say that they were "apprehensive that such economizing may eventually lead to habitual loss of income to freelancers."

One Marvel artist, who asked not to be identified, complained that Marvel was trying to play both ends of the field. "They're telling everyone how great they're going," he said, "but they're cutting the hell out of their staff rates." He also said that this decision virtually offset the recent Marvel decision to return original artwork to the artist.

A spokesman for Marvel, who also asked not to be identified, said the edict was "strictly temporary" and would probably be lifted before the summer months of 1974. "It's just one of those things," he said. "Every once in a while a company bottoms out, and we're at that point now. It should ease up soon, though."

The Paper Chase

As 1973 limped to a disheartening conclusion, the comic companies were finally struck by the massive paper shortages that had earlier paralyzed the rest of the publishing world.

The sharpest blow came when World Color Press of Maryland Heights, Missouri reduced their November paper allotment to publishers by 20 per cent. World Color, operating out of plants in Sparta, Illinois, prints almost all American comic books and 150 other magazines.

The announcement of the reduced allotment came last October 22nd in a letter to all companies served by World. Written by Vice President D.F. Curran, the letter asked all publishers to save newsprint and reduce their consumption wherever possible.

In a letter to **INSIDE COMICS** dated November 21, a month after the reduction was announced, Curran said that "our motivation obviously was to live with a condition where there was no paper in the warehouse, none on the track, and very little en route."

(Curran would not divulge the specific content of the letter he wrote to the publishers. "While there is nothing specifically secret in our letters advising publishers of the situation," he said, "we don't consider our correspondence with them as public domain.")

The allotment reduction meant each publisher would receive 20 per cent less paper than he had originally been promised. Publishers had to respond by cutting usage by 20 per cent, either by eliminating books, cutting print runs or lowering frequencies.

According to Curran, World Color's "restrictions" were lifted in late November and he assured the publishers there would be sufficient paper for the immediate future.

The shortage—both of regular newsprint and slick coated cover stock—was caused by two factors. Canada's major paper producing mills went on strike in late spring and most did not settle until late September.

(United States publishers receive 95 per cent of their paper supply from Canadian mills.)

To complicate the matter, the major Canadian freight railroads struck July 26th and were out of operation for nine weeks, further tightening the newsprint supply. Most of the paper produced before the paper mills struck was consequently stranded on railroad cars and could not be reached.

After both strikes were settled, Canadian mills slowly began to resume production, but **FOLIO, THE MAGAZINE FOR MAGAZINE MANAGEMENT** estimated it would be mid-1975 before the mills are again at full capacity.

Here is a run-down of the major events at each major company during the worst months of the crisis:

CHARLTON: Although they do not print their titles at World Color, Charlton was the most severaly affected comic company; they were forced to close down operations during November and December.

Operating from Derby, Connecticut, Charlton is the only comic company producing their complete package. Not only do they write, edit and draw their own comics, they also print and distribute the books.

When the paper crunch came, however, all their suppliers ran out of paper. When the strike came, they were forced to close operations since they had no paper on hand.

"The shut down is only temporary" Charlton Assistant Managing Editor Nicola Cuti told us last November. "We have been forced to shut down for two months, but we **will** be back in January."

Apparently unable to convince anyone, however, Cuti was forced to issue a press release last November 29th.

"Word has reached us that Charlton is dead, killed off by the paper shortage. Paraphrasing Mark Twin, I can only say that 'The reports of our death are greatly exaggerated'."

While the company was closed and not printing new comics, they asked wholesalers to redistribute unsold copies of existing issues. Cuti said besides keeping Charlton books on the newsstands, he hoped redistribution would "cause a temporary increase in our circulation, hopefully bringing in new readers."

Charlton finally reopened in early January and Cuti said that new Charlton magazines would be appearing in "early February." The first titles will be **BEETLE BAILEY** and **GHOSTLY HAUNTS**.

"We're going to be adding some super-heroes to the lines as soon as we can," he said. "The prime factors, however, are when and how much news stock will be forthcoming."

NATIONAL: Even before they were informed of the 20 per cent reduction in November, National had been forced to lop eight issues off their schedule.

In a letter to wholesalers dated October 19th, National said they "found it necessary to cancel" **BLACK MAGIC** (March issue), **LOIS LANE** (April issue), **SECRET ORIGINS** (April issue) **SECRETS OF SINISTER HOUSE** (April issue), **SUPERGIRL** (March issue), **WEIRD WESTERN TALES** (April issue) and **WEIRD WORLDS** (April issue).

National also increased the price of their 100 page, 50 cent magazines to 60 cents, mostly due to the staggering paper costs. They also cancelled a half-dozen marginal 32 page, 20 cent titles.

We tried to contact National Production Manager Sol Harrison for further information, but he was on vacation until early January. And despite a letter from his secretary, which promised we'd be able to reach him, Harrison never returned our phone calls. Our repeated inquiries went unanswered.

WARREN: The most obvious effect of the short paper supply on Warren Publishing Company was their across-the-board price rise from 75 cents to $1.

"Everything was going up, said Publisher James Warren, "and we weren't going to wait until we got crushed. So we raised the prices immediatley, not next year."

He quickly noted, however, that the books now contain more pages and more color at the higher prices. "Everyone concerned with our product got an increase, not only paper and ink suppliers. The writers, the artists, the editors, everybody got an increase. We had to raise our prices," he said. "But we gave people more for their money. That's the way we do it at Warren."

In the midst of the tight paper market, however, Warren announced publication of a new bimonthly magazine, **THE SPIRIT**.

James Warren

Commenting on the new book, Warren said that "people aren't going to get as much paper as they once got, that's for sure. But if you're careful, you'll survive and even be able to expand."

MARVEL: Marvel will be raising the price of their 32 page, 20 cent magazines to 25 cents in several months. The only other visible effect of the paper shortage has been the cancellation of several of their marginal 32 page magazines.

"They were all poor sellers," one Marvel staffer said. "We were going to kill them off anyway, but this shortage just hastened the process. We wanted to save the paper for better sellers, like **CONAN** and **SPIDER-MAN** and some new projects."

In a move that may be related to the shortage, some of Marvel's black and white magazines (which remain at 75 cents) are now printed in Canada.

No one was willing to comment on the switch, but it is believed that paper is somewhat easier to acquire at certain Canadian printers.

In order to retain their copyright on the book, however, Marvel was forced to open an editorial office in Montreal.

We attempted to contact Publisher Stan Lee, but he did not reply to our queries.

SYNDICATED STRIPS: Syndicates and comic strips were indirectly affected.

Many newspapers, in an effort to reduce their newsprint usage, trimmed their paper's page count. They reduced the news hole (the percentage of newspaper pages devoted to news), raised advertising rates while accepting fewer pages of ads and killed comic strips and supplements. **EDITOR AND PUBLISHER** reported that many had dropped comic strips altogether and several papers had dropped their Sunday supplements.

Greater Buffalo Press, which prints 75 per cent of the nation's newspaper comic supplements, ordered reductions in page count from all their clients. Newspapers using 12 page supplements every week were cut to ten pages per week; those using ten pages were cut to eight.

At the same time, John W. Kaessler, vice president of Greater Buffalo, urged newspapers to remain calm. "Don't push the panic button at this moment, but sit back and weather the storm."

Meanwhile, United Feature Syndicate now offers all their Sunday pages in a new quarter-page size. Third-page size had formerly been the smallest size available to newspapers.

Most everyone is optimistic about the future availability of paper at least in the comic industry; however, respected journals like **FOLIO** and **EDITOR AND PUBLISHER** insist there will be a continued serious shortage.

James Warren is the only comic publisher who agrees with the gloomier prognosis.

"Six months ago I paid $170 a ton for newprint. Last month it went to $200 a ton. By the end of January, it'll be $225 a ton. By the end of the year, I'm sure it will be $300 a ton. There's a shortage alright."

Leonard Darvin, administration of the Comics Code, was cheerier. "We have been informed by our suppliers that barring any further strikes, newsprint should be gradually available to all publishers for their normal output," he said.

While the crisis was at its peak, Darvin sent a letter to all distributors urging their cooperation. "The paper shortage has reached critical proportions," the note said. "Deliver all copies shipped to you to your dealers. Stop prematures. Order regulation of comics titles."

Darvin also urged wholesalers to pay "close attention to comics" to offset any loss of profits due to the paper shortage.

"More thorough distribution and redistribution is the answer" to the current crisis, Darvin told us last November. "In the months ahead, good selling titles will remain stable and will be expanded as the market indicates."

The paper crisis, he concluded, would be "no more than a 'bother'" in the months ahead. His conclusion was also supported by D.F. Curran of World Color.

"The condition reached a critical point [in November] due to struck mills, not expected supply of newspaper," he said. "And while paper is still in extremely tight supply, we expect to live by our obligations."

Spirit-ually Speaking

Now that Warren Publishing Company has contracted Will Eisner to produce a bi-monthly **SPIRIT** magazine, the company has been buying up all the existing supplies of **SPIRIT** material in hopes of cornering **THE SPIRIT** readership.

"I don't want anything competing with my product on any level," said publisher James Warren. "We're in business to survive and make money; and to survive, you have to eliminate all the competition you can."

Chief among available **SPIRIT** material was Krupp Comic Works' **THE SPIRIT #1** and **THE SPIRIT #2**. In order to stop further distribution of the underground book, Warren Publishing bought up the complete print run of both books.

Tyler Lantzy, business manager of Krupp, told **INSIDE COMICS** reporter Ronn Steinitz that "Warren bought everything we had, lock, stock and barrel and he paid 23½ cents a book for them."

James Warren, however, refused to comment on the price of the books. "What we pay for our merchandise is private." He later commented that his "real comment is that Lantzy is wrong." Still later, however, he admitted that "there are many ways to look at the price of an item."

Only The Shadow Knows

Shortly after the publication of **INSIDE COMIX #2** in **THE BUYER'S GUIDE**, we received a letter from David Finger of Wilmington, Delaware. "Denny O'Neil has been receiving comments hither and thither from Jim Steranko about his handling of The Shadow," wrote Finger. "Denny asked for rebuttal space in **COMIXSCENE** and was promptly denied."

We checked into the matter as Finger requested. As it happened, Steranko wrote an editorial in **COMIXSCENE #2** entitled "What Evil Lurks in the Hearts of Men Dept.," concerning himself, editor O'Neil and The Shadow character. He attacked a Shadow plot by Len Wein, a script written by O'Neil ("I considered the script at hand and realized to accept would have meant turning in an inferior story"), and O'Neil's handling of the book in general.

We contacted O'Neil and he said he had asked Steranko for room to explain his side of the story to **COMIXSCENE** readers. According to him, Steranko refused to give him any space at all.

"I didn't know what to do after that," said O'Neil, "but eventually I just let it go by the boards. I won't even bother to dignify Steranko's snipes anymore."

Steranko denies this ever happened, however. He told us at the Creation Convention that "Denny never asked for space. I don't know if we would have given him space if he had, but I don't remember him ever asking me."

People...

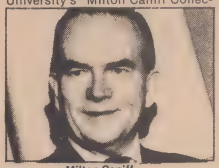
Dik Browne, creator of **HAGAR THE HORRIBLE** and co-creator of

Dik Browne

HI AND LOIS, won the National Cartoonist Society's Elzie Segar Award this past December 13, 1973. The award carries a $500 prize and was given to Browne for his "outstanding contribution to the art of cartooning."

Robert Taylor has been assigned to direct **THE NINE LIVES OF FRITZ THE CAT**, the second animated movie based on Robert Crumb's Fritz the Cat character. The new movie will be released by American International Pictures and produced by Steve Krantz Productions.

Milton Caniff has donated a collection of his work to Ohio State University's "Milton Caniff Collec-



Milton Caniff

tion for Research in Cinematography, Photography and Journalism." Included in the gift were pages from his two comic strips, **STEVE CANYON** and **TERRY AND THE PIRATES**. Caniff is a 1930 OSU graduate.

Herbert Goldberg, well-known magazine cartoonist, has published a four-page flyer of his published cartoons. Distributed

"Oh, the auto accident was trivial – it was what I had to say about his bumper sticker."

by mail to art directors and other potential customers, the flyer contained 36 of Goldberg's cartoons from **THE NEW YORKER, WALL STREET JOURNAL, THE SATURDAY REVIEW, SR/WORLD** and many others.

Charles Schulz has bought a mansion—from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Santa Rosa, California. The house, located on a four-acre estate and equipped with swimming pool, three-car garage, guest house and cabana, belonged to Bishop Mark J. Hurley, who inherited it in 1969 from the late Bishop Leo T. Maher. The property's asking price was slightly under $250,000, but neither Schul, creator of **PEANUTS**, or a spokesman for the Diocese would comment on the selling price.

Esteban Maroto, who has been bouncing back and forth between the black and white magazines of Warren and Marvel, has settled down for the time being. He is once again at Warren. "Maroto's back," said James Warren, "and it couldn't happen to a nicer artist or a nicer publisher."

Phil Seuling

Phil Seuling, organizer of the annual New York Comic Art Convention, has concluded a deal with the major comic publishers to distribute comic books to interested bookstores. Comic dealers who are not served by regular distributors can purchase copies of comic books published by National, Marvel and Warren at prices below wholesale rates. They can also purchase items from Wonderful Publishing Company and **THE MONSTER TIMES**. Further information is available from Phil Seuling, Box 177, Coney Island Station, Brooklyn, New York 11224.

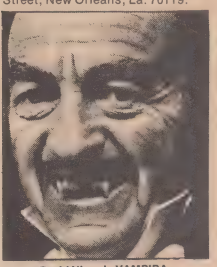
Terry Zwigoff, part-owner of San Francisco's People's Comics Store, reported that over $1,500 worth of comic books were stolen during the Thanksgiving weekend. He said that over 1,000 comics were missing, including early issues of **SPIDER MAN, CAPTAIN MARVEL, AVENGERS, FANTASTIC FOUR, IRON MAN** and **THOR**.

Selby Kelly and **Stephen Kelly**, wife and son of the late Walt Kelly, were chosen to succeed Walt on **POGO**. Mrs. Kelly and the younger Kelly will be assisted by Bill Vaughan, associate editor of the **KANSAS CITY STAR**, and Don Morgan, a California animator who has worked on the **POGO** animated features.

Jon B. Campbell, owner of San Francisco's Golden Gate Comic Art Shop, will be offering a copy of **DETECTIVE #27** for "about $2,000," according to a January 5th United Press International (UPI) story. Campbell told the UPI that he purchased the copy in "fine condition" from a "literary scholar" who refused to be identified. "I've seen only one other during the ten years I've been in the business," Campbell was quoted as saying. According to him, he bought the comic January 4th from the owner who originally bought it at the age of eight. **INSIDE COMICS** could not reach Campbell for comment.

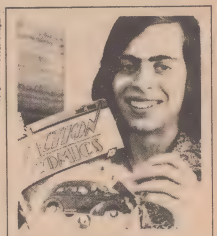
James L. Freeman, the discoverer of **PEANUTS** has retired as managing editor of United Feature Syndicate. Freeman told **EDITOR AND PUBLISHER** writer Lenora Williamson that he originally received **PEANUTS** in the form of a daily panel. He subsequently told Charles Schulz to re-draw the feature as a strip and after Schulz did so, he was signed.

Lester Boutillier is writing a book entitled **THE MASTER LOCSMITHS** which will detail the "careers" of the letter writers of the early 1960's. He says he will publish it as a fanzine this summer and it will concentrate on the Julius Schwartz-edited letter columns in National's superhero comics. Boutillier is also forming "Project Revival," a group dedicated to reviving the old Gardner Fox-written titles—**HAWKMAN** and **GREEN LANTERN**. It will publish a newsletter, available from Lester at 2726 Castiglione Street, New Orleans, La. 70119.



David Niven in VAMPIRA

James Warren, publisher of **VAMPIRELLA**, caused Columbia Pictures to change the name of their new movie from **VAMPIRELLA** to **VAMPIRA**. The movie, starring David Niven as a vampire, is shooting on location in England. The name mix-up was accidental and the movie had nothing to do with Warren's Vampirella character.



WRETCHED EXCESS
Mitchell Mehdy, eighteen-year-old "King of the Comics," bought a copy of the first Superman comic book for $1,801.26.

Mitchell Mehdy, self-proclaimed "King of Comics," was handed a "Dubious Achievement Award" in the January, 1974 issue of **ESQUIRE** magazine. The eighteen-year-old Mehdy purchased a copy of **ACTION #1** for $1801.26 from West Coast comic dealer Bruce Hamilton. He's taken his lumps from comics fandom in general, too, most fans complaining Mehdy has over-inflated an already overpriced comic market. **—J.B.**

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SUPERHEIST

The Great Comic Art Rip-Off

by Joe Brancatelli

My first visit to a comic book house came when I was about ten years old. When National produced comics from their 575 Lexington Avenue offices, they'd hold organized tours of their operations every Wednesday afternoon. As a dutiful comic book fan, I gathered several friends and traveled all the way to Manhattan. There we were, four gawky kids from Brooklyn—smack in the middle of the country's largest comic book house.

A balding man (who I now believe was a harassed-looking Julie Schwartz) took us all on the grand tour. We passed writers and colorists and artists and letterers. Kids asked silly questions—about go-go checks or Johnny DC or something. I remember one kid asking why someone had pencilled a bra on the nude girl in the Playboy calendar. During the tour, National gave things away. Color slides of comic book covers, Batman and Penguin posters, comic books and dozens of other trinkets. And they even gave away original artwork. Everybody got a free page.

Everyone except my friend, Kevin Cadger. He got ten pages because he didn't get any Batman posters.

That's why it came as no surprise when word leaked out that over 1900 pages of original artwork had disappeared from National's files. After all the years of giving it away, or throwing it out, or shreding it up, someone finally lifted 1900 pages and no one was the wiser. At least for a while.

Original comic art pages have always been treated trashily. Companies never bothered to return them. Newspaper syndicates did horrendous things to originals before returning them. But mostly no one cared, especially since comic art wasn't particularly valuable.

Then Jerry Bails started the whole fandom thing. The conventions, the fanzines, the newsletters, trading, selling, buying and the whole spiel. All of a sudden, comic originals were worth something. And that's when the hassles started. Artists wanted their originals back. Knowing they could supplement their income by selling them, many artists resorted to stealing their material back. In fact, most of the originals on the market in the early 1960's were stolen.

"One thing I can always remember," one now-retired artist said, "was how we always had to sneak into Marvel or DC or Charlton or Warren and steal our own stuff back. After a while, it became a game. Everyone knew we were doing it, but they just said, 'Well, that's the way it is' and laughed a little."

A POCKETFUL OF ART

But things changed. In 1970, National stopped general distribution of original artwork, shocking artists and inflating the collector's market.

"We had long discussions with our legal department on the matter," said Sol Harrison, National's vice president and production manager. "They seemed to feel that we should hold on to all our artwork. They were really frightened that if someone had the originals to a complete story they would run to South America and print it. We had copyrights to protect and the legal department felt holding the artwork was the best procedure."

National's policy went generally unchallenged and stock accumulated. "We must have had thousands of pages around after a year or two," said Harrison. "Eventually we had to get storage space, but there was still plenty of art around the offices."

And therein lay the danger. Thousands of pages were just sitting around at National's 909 Third Avenue set-up, waiting for some sharp entrepreneur to make his collection. And being a part of the vast Warner Communications conglomerate, which also owned Warner Brothers, Seven Arts, Paperback Library, Warner Books, Atlantic, Electra Asylum and Atco records among others, National's offices were being moved to the Warner Communications Building at 75 Rockefeller Center. After several years of planning, the crosstown move was finally begun in the summer of 1973.

"It was just one giant, fucking madhouse," one National editor said at the time. "There were drawing boards and desks and stuff all other the place. And artwork was scattered everywhere."

No one at National was particularly concerned with the art. It was stacked on skids and tied down with baling wire. No one thought of taking inventory and thousands of pages, worth several thousand dollars on the fan market, was unaccounted for. It was being moved from office to office, waiting to be picked up and moved to the new building.

"In retrospect, of course, it was a dumb move," a National production staffer said. "Had Sol known any better, maybe there would have been an in and out inventory. But nobody gave a shit. The art went in and out and no one looked twice."

Except for several sharp-eyed young staff members. Most of them, lower echelon employees, came up through the fan ranks and knew the value of the unattended artwork. They also apparently knew which skids contained the best material.

A collector who later purchased some of the stolen art for his private collection said that "no one but an insider could have done the job. It was planned perfectly. They got a couple of hundred beautiful pages. It was a perfect set-up."

Another collector who bought some of the purloined material agreed. "The plan was simple," he said. "Have a friend on the moving crew 'misplace' a flat of artwork. Later, if it was discovered missing, it could easily be found without getting in trouble. If no one noticed it was missing, it was just taken away later.

"Certain staff members had decided to rip-off some of the pages," the collector said. "And it was an inside job."

Naturally, no one ever missed the 'misplaced' skid and it simply disappeared.

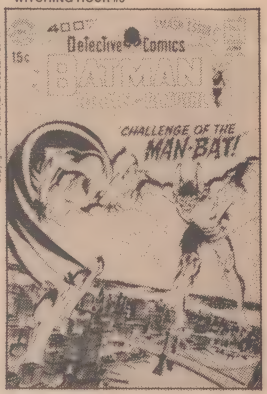
Harrison pleaded total ignorance

Stolen Artwork

INSIDE COMICS has learned that the following comic art stories and pages are among the 1900 pages stolen from the files of National Periodicals:

Neal Adams stories:
- **BATMAN #232** (all pages but splash)
- **BATMAN #234** (all pages but splash)
- **GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW #84** (all pages but splash)
- **GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW #86** (all pages but splash)
- **AQUAMAN #52** (Deadman eight page story)

Neal Adams covers:
- **GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW #77, #80**
- **DETECTIVE #400, #405**
- **CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN #74**
- **D.C. SPECIAL #6**
- **ALL STAR WESTERN #2**
- **TOMAHAWK #128**
- **HOUSE OF MYSTERY #186, #189**
- **HOUSE OF SECRETS #81**
- **WITCHING HOUR #9**



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The cover of DETECTIVE #400, as it appeared in printed form. This page, along with over 1900 others, were stolen from National's vault.

Jim Aparo stories:
- **AQUAMAN #53**
- **PHANTOM STRANGER #9**
- **PHANTOM STRANGER #17**

Jim Aparo covers:
- **PHANTOM STRANGER #7**

Kane and Wood stories:
- **CAPTAIN ACTION #3**

Green Lantern/Star Saffire story

Jack Kirby stories:
- **JIMMY OLSEN #140**

Berni Wrightson stories:
- **HOUSE OF MYSTERY #188**

Mike Kaluta stories:
- Tales of Krypton from **ACTION**

Gray Morrow stories:
- Tales of Krypton from **ACTION**
- Rose and Thorn from **LOIS LANE**

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about the circumstances surrounding the theft. "I'm sure this happened during the move of course. We had breakage and different things. So many hands were touching, but these things can happen." He claimed National knew nothing else.

Yet, the question of whether the theft was an inside job was a sore point. "I don't know. I can't say anything," snapped Harrison. "I don't think it's an inside job, so I don't want to say anything at all." But Harrison wasn't interested in saying too much about any facet of the theft.

A National staffer we spoke to assured us that an inventory had been taken. "Right after Sol found out, he had a complete inventory taken. At first we thought thousands of pages were missing. We finally found out that only 1928 pages were gone." Harrison vehemently denied that he had taken an inventory. "We're in the process of taking inventory right now. But we haven't done anything yet. We don't know how many pages were taken yet."

Harrison's reluctance to address himself to the facts of the theft even extended to a description of what was stolen. "We don't know yet what was taken. We've left that up in the air at the moment. We'll know after the inventory comes in."

Harrison's production people disagreed, however. According to one staff member, an exact listing of what was stolen has been in circulation for several months. They think that the material will never surface, however. "It's fantastic stuff," one artist said. "I'd like to have some of the material for my own collection. People who buy it may never sell it." Additionally, much of the stolen material was romance pages which are not big sellers and never appear at conventions anyway. [Editor's note: **INSIDE COMICS** has uncovered a partial listing of the stolen material. See inset elsewhere.]

WANNA BUY SOME HOT PICTURES?

After the skid of artwork was misplaced, the thief was forced to unload the material quickly. And since there is no known comic fence, he had to take his material to a convention. His first opportunity to sell the artwork was at New York's August Comic Book Marketplace. Unfortunately, most of the city's biggest dealers were missing from this particular fanclave. Scheduled only a week before the larger San Diego convention, larger dealers like Phil Seuling, Al Schuster and Bill Morse weren't even in attendance.

"That was really a rough break for the seller," said a collector who now owns some of the stolen material. "He was sitting there with maybe 50-60 thousand dollars worth of stuff and the big guys were out of town."

What the thief eventually did was to unload the artwork at any price. Carrying a few sample pages around the Hotel McAlpin's dealer's room (one collector said two Adams **DETECTIVE** covers and a **GREEN LANTERN/ GREEN ARROW** page was among the batch), he struck a deal with a small time comic art dealer working out of New Jersey.

Another collector who eventually bought several dozen pages of the stolen art claimed that the dealer "lacked the wherewithal to swing the deal by himself and worked out a deal with a bigger New York dealer." The New Jersey-New York combine bought the 1900 page stack for about $5000. "A value that I would have loved any day," said one New York City collector who heard the price. "Especially since the stuff had to be worth ten or fifteen times what he got."

The dealer who subsequently bought the artwork may have been small, but he was smart. Knowing National would probably try to trace the art, he limited his sales. According to one purchaser, "this dealer wouldn't sell to anyone for speculation purposes. He sold it only to top-notch, highly reputable collectors. He knew that going to big collectors meant the stuff would stand in the closet—in someone's collection."

Another collector, who admitted to buying "only a page or two" of the stolen material, said that the dealer was "the most careful man I've ever seen. He told me that he'd only sell the art if I put it in my collection and didn't sell it. Even then he was cautious and looked like he didn't trust me."

About a half-dozen well known, highly respected collectors eventually purchased the bulk of the choice material for about $20 a page. The seller dumped the pages at this low price to minimize his risk. With dozens of high quality, much desired Neal Adams and Jack Kirby pages in his possession, the dealer sold the pages at a lower-than-normal price in exchange for a relative measure of security.

"Before he would even let me look at the stuff," a New Jersey collector said, "I had to promise him that I'd keep the stuff only for my collection. Then he brought out all the Adams and Kirby and Wrightson and Kaluta stuff. It was unbelievable the stuff he had. His prices were really cheap. So I shut my mouth and bought about 30 pages."

Within the week of the August Comic Book Marketplace, most of the best material was already sold. However, since he had a large amount of Neal Adams pages, he took the remaining material to the San Diego Convention. Adams was the guest of honor at the annual fanclave and he was sure he would do very well.

And while he did sell a goodly amount

Games People Play

Reporters are used to getting the run around. Hell, it's a part of the business. You knock your brains out developing material and checking it out. Then you finally get to see corporate big-wigs and they try to throw you off the track. Or they don't cooperate. Or they simply drive you up the wall by distorting what you know to be true.

But no one is better at diversion and subterfuge than Sol Harrison, vice-president and production manager of National Comics.

Several weeks after I began collecting information about the art theft, I wrote Harrison asking for an interview. Dated October 12th, 1973, the letter emphasized that I had developed enough information to write a story with or without National's official cooperation. I asked that he contact me at his convenience.

Amazingly enough, Harrison called the offices of **THE MONSTER TIMES** on October 22nd and spoke to my publisher, Larry Brill, and said he would be interested in giving the National position sometime during the coming week. My publisher said that I'd be in touch within the hour.

My boss introduced himself saying, "I'm Larry Brill, the publisher of **THE MONSTER TIMES**. I don't think we've ever met before."

Harrison replied, "That's not my problem," and hung up.

I should have known better and killed the interview idea immediately, but I called Harrison anyway. He said that he was sitting on a grand jury and would be in and out all week.

I said that I understood and suggested he contact me whenever he had time to talk to me. Harrison said to call him first thing Friday morning, October 26th.

When I called that Friday morning, I spoke to Harrison's secretary Midge and she suggested I come down immediately. "He's not busy today," she said, "just pick a time."

"Whenever it's easiest for Mr. Harrison," I said, allowing how I was sure he was a busy man. Three o'clock that afternoon would be fine, she said.

When I got to the Warner Communications building, I must have tripped a secret alarm. The minute I walked through the National's sixth floor glass doors, the lobby secretary picked up a telephone, pushed a number of buttons and said, "Brancatelli's here for Harrison."

Which was weird, considering that I had never met the woman in my life. To this day, I don't know how she knew who I was.

Ten minutes later, Harrison's secretary, wearing a red dress and Arlene Francis silver-rimmed glasses, took me by the hand and led me to Harrison's office. I was then deposited in a contemporary chair in front of Harrison's modern slab desk. After exchanging the usual niclties, Harrison began a long discourse about how he was going to get "anyone involved with stealing our property." He continued for about ten minutes. I had already lost control of the interview, without ever asking my first question.

Before I could break in with a question—Harrison was recounting his week on the grand jury and I decided I had to cut him off—Jack Adler came blustering in with photographs Harrison simply "had to look at immediately."

After rummaging through the photos, Harrison was about to resume the monologue I was determined to cut short. I knew my time was limited, and I wasn't prepared to let Harrison frit it all away without my asking some salient questions.

Before I could ask a question, however, a small man in a grey suit popped his head into the office. He had an appointment with Harrison—at the same time as my appointment.

"Yeah," laughed Harrison, unbuttoning his white shirt at the collar. "I guess we must have scheduled two people at one time. Things like that happen all the time."

Before Harrison could continue with his explanation, his secretary broke in: "Sol, you've got that meeting with Carmine and it's already started. Jack said to hurry up."

Harrison left immediately and I later learned the meeting was scheduled for ten minutes after the small guy's and my appointment. Twenty minutes went by and I was feeling sadder for the guy in the grey suit than I was for myself. After all, if nothing else, I was getting a story about how National plays games with people. Little grey suit was probably selling pens or something and he might never make a sale.

While I waited for Harrison to return, his secretary told me that it was common practice for National to schedule people at the same time. The meeting, she said, had been planned for weeks and I was fit in just before, "to keep you on your toes."

But before I could get up on those toes and walk out, Harrison returned and I shot a question at him before he could resume his monologue. Now I was sure I had regained control of the interview.

Wrong again.

Harrison finished the question—could he tell me when he first learned of the theft?—and

Sol Harrison

asked me if that was "all I needed for the interview? He was startled to learn that I had more than one question to ask him. He just assumed I would sit down, tape his speech and disappear into the night.

After that, I decided I better dispense with the preliminary questions and get to the important material.

"The notice you sent various fanzines claims that you will litigate under copyright laws," I said. "Lawyers I've spoken to seem to feel you can only litigate this as a felony like larceny."

Harrison looked flushed. He didn't answer, rather he called for National Publisher Carmine Infantino.

"Joe Brancatelli," said Harrison, "this is the publisher. Joe had a question pertaining ... uh ... to ... uh ... about the letter you sent concerning the material that was allegedly stolen."

Infantino shook my hand and I greeted him as cordially as I could. (He wrote me a letter several years ago saying he would sue me. He never did, of course, but I make it a policy not to be too nice to people who say they're going to sue me.) Infantino looked around Harrison's office, saying nothing. Harrison just taked about Infantino, probably hoping I'd forget he hadn't answered my question.

Infantino finally said, "You don't need me anymore, do you?"

"I just wanted you to meet Joe," Harrison laughed. "I know you've seen some of his writing."

"Yes, I sure have," infantino said as he walked away.

All that, I suppose, was meant to shake me up, because as soon as Infantino left, Harrison wanted to know if I had any other questions.

"How about the one about the letter," I complained testily.

"Oh, right," said Harrison. "What was that again?"

I gave up. Harrison had won; he'd worn me down. Reporter or no reporter, I had just wasted over an hour in Harrison's office. He hadn't been there most of the time, he'd scheduled two people at one time, slipped off to a meeting, tried to fluster me. All on a day his secretary said he wasn't busy.

So, all my journalistic pretentions aside, I just gave up. I excused myself and got the customary escort to the lobby doors.

In running through the "interview" tape, I came across a Harrison comment I had previously missed.

While Infantino was in the office, Harrison was explaining what I was doing there.

"I'm telling Joe our posture on the theft, because, of course, he's going to put it in the magazine. Rather than have him put it in the way he thinks it should be written, I want to make sure he writes it the way we want it to be written."

Touche.

—J.B.

of pages, had he not brought the material to San Diego, National might have never discovered the theft.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

One of the other guests at the San Diego Convention was none other than Sol Harrison. Even though several weeks had passed since the material was purloined, Harrison was still unaware of the theft.

"Everything was incredibly hectic during our move," Harrison said. "I was mainly concerned with the orderly transition of the office. Who thought we would have such a chunk of art stolen?"

Harrison didn't find out about the theft until he happened to drop by the convention's auction. On display for bidding was a Neal Adams drawing for a **HOUSE OF MYSTERY** cover.

"Sol told me it was the first time he realized something was fishy," one of his assistants said later. "He just knew that the page should have been in the office. That's when Sol finally realized stuff was missing."

Returning to his office the next week, Harrison initiated an inventory. He also called in a professional security team to investigate the theft. "It just so happens that Warner Communications now owns a security outfit," said Harrison, "and I had no qualms about going to them. I told them, 'Listen, this stuff is missing, and we want it all back'."

Unfortunately for Harrison and National, the security outfit turned up very little. The dealer had been so careful in selling the material, most of it was buried in private collections.

"The only way I'm going to give up my stuff," said one collector, "is if I die. And I'm only 27, so they've got a long wait."

Besides disclosing that 1928 pages were missing, the only other fact the investigation turned up was a rough idea of the theft's date. While almost everyone concerned with the theft agreed it came during the National move, no one could do more than speculate. Luckily, one of the stolen stories had been previously taken.

A Neal Adams story, "Snowbirds Don't Fly," had been lifted by one of National's production people several months before. After publisher Infantino discovered the theft, the staffer returned the material one or two weeks before the National move. When the inventory was taken after the 1900 page theft, however, the story was again missing, and that set the theft right around the time of National's move.

One collector, a close friend of Neal Adams, said the story was "originally stolen with the intention of returning it to Adams. It never reached Neal—and he would have returned it if it did—and when it was returned to National," the collector said, the story was being held in "special care."

'WE WANT OUR MATERIAL BACK'

After definitely establishing that the original artwork was indeed stolen, National's legal department drafted a letter Harrison said was sent to anyplace "where our art had touched base." The notice first appeared in the sixth issue of **COMIXSCENE** and later in **THE COMIC READER #101**. Captioned "An Important Notice From National Periodicals," the letter read:

> "It has come to the Publisher's attention that valuable original artwork representing fictional characters of which Publisher is the copyright owner has been stolen from the Publisher's archives and is currently being offered for sale.
>
> "PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that any person, firm or corporation who is found to possess this artwork or is found selling or attempting to distribute this artwork will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the Federal Copyright Act and all other applicable federal and state statutes. Anyone with knowledge of the whereabouts of this artwork or the events leading to its theft from the Publisher is urged to contact Publisher immediately."

The letter was the first public notice about the theft of the artwork, and Harrison was particularly disturbed by the cavalier attitude toward the material. He constantly mentioned that National owned the material and that they were "determined to secure its return." National was finished playing games.

"This is stolen merchandise," he said, his voice rising to a falsetto. "I think the industry has become very lax in their conception of what a piece of artwork is. If you don't think of it in terms of a piece of artwork, and think of it in terms of a piece of property, you'll know it's a felony. It's stolen property."

He was insistant in his claim that National would take the case to court. "If anyone peddles stolen property, he becomes an accessory to that felony. All I want people to understand is that we're going to prosecute these people. We want to find out who did this. Someone stole our property," Harrison said again. "We want it back and we're going to prosecute to get it."

There was never any doubt that the theft was a felony, but some lawyers who've seen National's statement disagreed with its thrust.

Alan M. Carson, consulting partner in the California law firm of Helmut, Kline and Stone, is a copyright specialist and questioned the letter's legal foundation. "It's certainly conceivable that the owner could sign a complaint against the defendant for larceny and other charges," Carson said, "but I really doubt they can prosecute under the Federal Copyright Act."

Seymour C. Kline, also a copyright specialist in Helmut, Kline and Stone, attacked the statement's validity from another legal standpoint.

"It's rare—in fact, I can't cite an example—where one can prosecute under the copyright law unless the copyright has truly been infringed upon. Unless the defendant put the material into print, I doubt the owner can sue under the Federal Copyright Act."

Kline said that National had a strong case under larceny and theft statutes, however. "The best line of prosecution, it seems to me, is to try to prove that the defendant sold this material over state lines. Then it becomes a federal offense—transporting stolen merchandise over state borders."

Carson said that copyright laws are primarily "civil" statutes in most states and rarely entail anything more than lawsuits. "You can sue on federal copyright laws, but I doubt they could try to hang a theft on him under copyright laws."

Harrison, on the other hand, said that the letter was a document prepared by the company's lawyers. "That letter is a legal document. Our legal department framed that letter and they know what it refers to. They feel it's a violation of copyright. I'm not going to question them on that."

* * * * *

The theft also brought to a boil a question that had already been simmering for some time. Some free-lance artists were claiming that National never owned the artwork in the first place. In the 22nd-23rd issue of the **ACBA NEWSLETTER**, the Academy of Comic Book Arts took a rare snipe at National: "If, as the Academy argues, the physical artwork belongs to its creators, then many artists have suffered a grave injustice at the hands of [National] ... Return the artwork to its creators. Put aside storage charges, security systems, lack of confidence in employees."

Neal Adams, much of whose work was among the stolen, and Howard Chaykin have stated they will no longer work for National due to the theft.

But National's main concern will reamin with the artwork itself. They have pressed their efforts to regain the stolen material. And they are serious about prosecuting. According to one National staffer, "All you hear is Sol and Carmine talk about is how they'd like to get the bastards who stole the stuff."

But, as several collectors who purchased pieces of the stolen material have said, National has to find them first. And that's shaping up as a task even Warner Communication's vast network cannot handle.

You might even say that finding the thieves is a job for Superman. □

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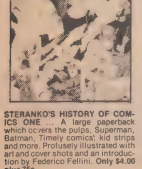

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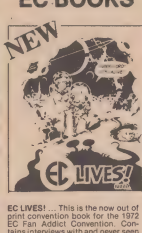

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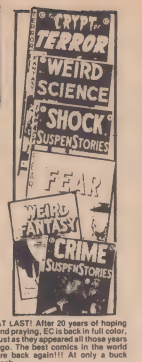

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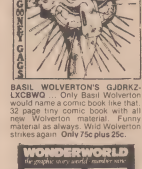

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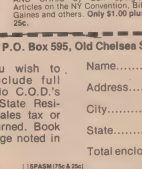

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What's a Nice Counter-Culture Visionary Like Robert Crumb Doing on a Secluded Farm in California?

by Keith Green

Interviewing Robert Crumb is not an assignment writers savor. Meet Crumb personally and he's a most cordial fellow. His company includes story-telling, drinking, playing guitar or harp or fiddle and general tomfoolery. But get Crumb in front of a microphone or a notebook and he freezes. He isn't known for his glib conversation during formal interview sessions where both reporter and subject strive for the "relevant" questions and answers.

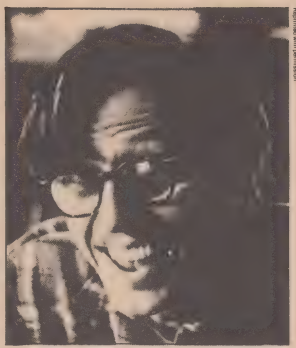
People intrude on Robert Crumb's privacy constantly. So much so that he's become somewhat of a hermit, retreating to his northern California farm about 100 miles from San Francisco. Crumb's friends act as a buffer between the famed cartoonist/medieval romanticist and the probing eye of the "outside world."

During the drive through the Lionel landscape from San Francisco to Crumb's farm, it is impossible not to think about Crumb's pivotal position in the formation of what is now known as the underground comix industry. It began unpretentiously when Don Donahue printed the first several thousand copies of Crumb's **ZAP** comix on his tiny multilith. Neither of them could have foreseen the consequences.

Distribution was simpler then. One sunny afternoon, Crumb and Donahue loaded the trunk of an old Hudson with **ZAP** comix and set out to spread the word. They started on San Francisco's Haight Street—and the day's proceeds were desperately needed. Crumb was living in a dive on Mission Street for $3.00 a day, pouring over a drawing board day and night.

Within months, Crumb and Donahue had birthed an industry. The only prerequisite for an underground company then was $800—the money needed to cover the printing costs of an underground title.

Gilbert Shelton arrived in San Francisco with a few friends from Texas—Jaxon, Fred Todd and Dave Moriarity—and started Rip-Off Press. Soon, thousands of Shelton's **FREAK BROTHERS** comix were circulating throughout the country.



A rare picture of R. Crumb by himself. A recluse, he rarely allows photographs, but he often draws himself into comic strips. This full page self-portrait appeared in TALES FROM THE LEATHER NUN, published by Last Gasp-Eco in 1973. The story was called, appropriately enough, "The Adventures of R. Crumb Himself."

Rip-Off made their share of mistakes, though. Like buying a four color press. That blunder forced them to plow all the company's profits back into the huge machine's upkeep. And Moriarity's business acumen left much to be desired. He complained that Rip-Off was selling too many books with too little profit.

His idea to keep profits up? Sell less books! Forgive them, Dr. Keynes, for they know not what they do.

An ex-Ceylon Peace Corps member/ex-Bakersfield engineer/ecology freak named Ron Turner teamed up with wealthy-but-hip business tycoon to form The Last Gasp-Eco Funnies Company. Last Gasp specialized in science fiction and fantasy, and while they never published a title by Robert Crumb, they did secure material by Richard Corben, Justin Green, Ted Richard, Larry Todd and many others. Later, after Turner's wealthy patron went to jail, Turner took over the company and tried to be a one-man juggernaut. Nevertheless, Last Gasp has gone on to become the second largest underground publisher in the country.

The Print Mint, under Don Schenker and Bob Rita, had already become the biggest producer. They were across the San Francisco Bay in Berkeley selling posters when Donahue and Crumb founded Apex Novelties. But when Donahue's tiny press couldn't handle the demand for **ZAP** comix, The Print Mint stepped in and has printed every **ZAP** since 1969. And although issues of **ZAP** zero through six still bear Donahue's "Apex Novelties" shield, The Print Mint does the production. Added to the sales on their **YELLOW DOG** series, The Print Mint quickly developed into the top underground house in the field.

And then there came John Bagley's Company and Sons. They've been accused of massive rip-offs, but Company and Sons were responsible for the publication of Bill Griffith's **YOUNG LUST** series—which can be found anywhere from the spaciest head shop to the most mundane Long Island Rail Road station.

Out in Milwaukee, underground artist Denis Kitchen formed Krupp Comic Works. Despite publishing Jayzey Lynch's work in **BIJOU**, Crumb titles like **XYZ** and **HOMEGROWN FUNNIES** and other titles, the company almost went bankrupt, due mainly to inept handling of the business end of the company.

Enter Tyler Lantzy, straight out of Notre Dame University. Most underground observers consider Lantzy a

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financial genius. He recently engineered a giant deal with The Warren Publishing Company that still has comic watchers shaking their heads (see this issue's "Comic Report").

But today, Crumb has lost much of the enthusiasm he once had for the comic industry. he's acknowledged as the greatest and best of the undergrounders, and yet he's done little new work. What he has done remains unpublished, mostly because of the June Supreme Court ruling on obscenity.

Crumb's last bit of comix work, **FELCH**, has yet to be printed. Similar in size and content to his earlier **SNATCH** comix, no established publisher will chance printing and releasing it. **FELCH** works off the theory that there is humor in extending classic sexual hang-ups to their logical extremes. Crumb believes the readers will laugh at a dilemma of that sort.

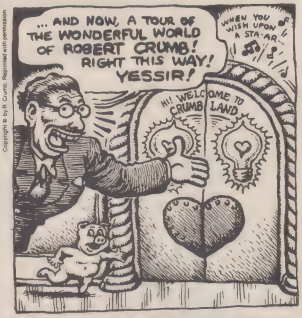
But readers can only laugh at **FELCH** if it is published. And that seems far in the future.

Through miles of lush terrain, endless miles of backroads and cowpaths traversing obscure mountains, the thought of a disillusioned Crumb remains paramount. After a fork at an unnamed dam and a perilous half-mile drive down a narrow precipice, Crumb's "complex" of farmhouses confront you. Crumb, the founder but present malcontent of the undergrounds, stands knee-deep in a pigpen, shoveling dung into a quarter-ton pickup truck.

Dana, Crumb's wife, arrives with children and friends to cook dinner. A Barbara Stanwyck-type of character, she's at home here, working the spread and hustling the studs. She wouldn't be out of character yelling, "Hey, Wes honey, how's about splittin' some fence posts for the Northwest 40?"

You later learn Dana has bought a cow that has since gone mad and now plans to "chase it down, blow its brains out, slit its throat and get the good-for-nuthin' horse to haul it back to the ranch for burgers."

After dinner, Crumb retreats to a different farmhouse. He starts a fire in the cold, damp shed, lights a smoke and occasionally swigs from a bottle of "Early Times." He thinks he's ready to answer some questions.


... AND NOW, A TOUR OF THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF ROBERT CRUMB! RIGHT THIS WAY! YESSIR!
WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR...
HI! WELCOME TO CRUMB LAND
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R. Crumb-cum-Groucho Marx in a story called "The Confessions of R. Crumb," which appeared in THE PEOPLE'S COMICS from 1972. Groucho Crumb kicks R. Crumb into "Crumb Land," where he immediately reverts to his pre-natal state.

GREEN: You've always encouraged a lot of different artists to enter the field. But, in actuality, out of the 260 underground titles in print, less than fifty are maintaining the industry. Do you think that astheticism has anything to do with commercialism?

CRUMB: No, I don't. It doesn't necessarily follow that something that is great art will sell. There's a lot of great stuff out that doesn't sell. Rory Hayes is a great example. His stuff is unpopular, but it's great. There will always be some appreciation for stuff like that—but not enough to make it commercially successful.

GREEN: I'm talking about books like **JUNK** and **LITTLE GREEN DINOSAUR.**

CRUMB: Some of that stuff is just uninteresting and dull crap. Whenever something is as open and loose as undergrounds, you're going to have a full range of quality. The weird stuff that is interesting; the stuff that's popular and dumb but still sells well; the stuff that's popular and good; then stuff that's not popular and not good. But after a while, the guys in the business end are bound to reach a point where they wise up and try to figure out some kind of formula for selling comix. Especially when the prosperity's on the skids.

An early Crumb drawing from SNATCH COMICS. The 1968 comic never carried his name, but corruptions like "R. Cum," "R. Scum" and "R. Crustt" did appear.

GREEN: You mean formula stuff like **HAROLD HEDD #2**? It had sex, it had dope, it had violence, it had macho. It sold out the entire print run in one month. That has something to say about the people who are buying undergrounds. They're getting a particular clientele—which is a totally different audience from the original underground people.

CRUMB: Sure.

GREEN: The salesman working the Bay Area shops for Last Gasp sells about 10,000 comix a month. He seems to feel the people who are buying comix are these 18 year-old white, suburban kids who want to find out what 'hip' is.

CRUMB: Yeah, sure. They're just looking for entertainment, you know? They want 'hip' entertainment. They can't get that from straight comics.

Also, some people like comic books and some people don't. There are only a certain number of people who enjoy reading comic books anyway.

GREEN: But Americans were raised on comic books.

CRUMB: Yeah, but a lot of people had parents who wouldn't let them read comics when they were kids. A lot of people rejected comic books as something they couldn't enjoy for some reason or another.

GREEN: But you still get lots of fan mail, don't you?

CRUMB: Naw, not anymore. I'm a has-been. You should be interviewing Aline [an underground cartoonist staying at Crumb's farm]. **You'd get a much more dynamic story—all about the new women's movement in comics. It'd definitely be more interesting than doing me. Jeez, I'm old hat. There are a million stories about me. I'm part of the 1960's—passe.**

GREEN: Then what about the people who buy your comix?

CRUMB: God knows. As soon as the cajuns absorb underground comix, that'll be it, I guess. ...The people in the Georgia Sea Islands.

GREEN: They'll cover the earth, like Sherwin-Williams paint?

CRUMB: Naw, it goes out from the center where it started. It doesn't cover everything at one time. It makes a ripple and the center becomes empty again, and the ripple goes out, reaching the hinterlands. The people in the center are no longer interested, though, by the time it gets to the outskirts.

I don't know if that's true. I just made that up.

GREEN: How long have you been drawing cartoons as a main gig?

CRUMB: Drawing underground comix, or just drawing?

GREEN: I know you did some greeting cards...

CRUMB: Yeah, I used to be a commercial artist. Been doing underground comix since late 1967.

GREEN: When did you run into S. Clay Wilson and the **ZAP** artists?

CRUMB: In the late 1960's. I really don't remember.

GREEN: In San Francisco?

CRUMB: All over. I was travelling around, you know? I ran into Jayzey Lynch in Chicago. Met Wilson in San Francisco. Met Spain Rodriguez and Kim Deitch in New York.

GREEN: Don Donahue, one of the first people involved with Apex Novelties, has said that the birth of the undergrounds was a joke that got out of hand. He said that you were sitting around drunk one night and came up with the idea of doing a comic book. Donahue had a multilith and you just printed something up and went out on the street and...

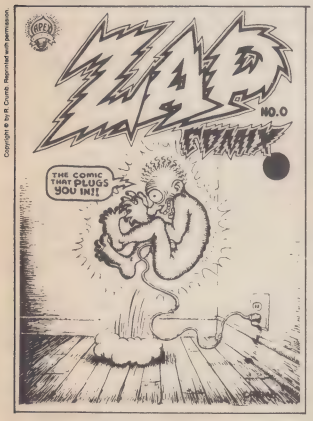
CRUMB: Nah, it just started small. It wasn't a joke. We wanted to get a comic book out. It was a thrill to get a comic book out—it was an exciting thing, you know?

GREEN: How did you decide who would be the **ZAP** cartoonists?

CRUMB: I didn't. I didn't decide that.

GREEN: Well, who did? Did Donahue just get a bunch of people together and say, 'Let's everybody do a couple of pages'?

CRUMB: I did this comic for this guy named Brian Zahn in Philadelphia. First I did some stuff for his underground newspaper in Philadelphia. He came back and said 'Hey, people really liked that stuff a lot! Why don't you send a whole comic?'



ZAP #0 was published in 1967 and carried the Crumb classic "Meatball," a charming tale about—you guessed it—meatballs. Mr. Sketchum (Crumb) and Mr. Natural also appeared in this pioneer effort.

I did two comix—ZAP #0 and ZAP #1. I sent him ZAP #0 and told him another was ready as soon as that one sold.

GREEN: Weren't the originals of ZAP #1 stolen, though?

OBOY, I'M FEELIN' DEVILISH TODAY! THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT SORT OF TWISTED PERVERTED DRAWINGS I'LL COME UP WITH! ...AND YA KNOW FOLKS...
Copyright © by R. Crumb. Reprinted with permission
FILE 13
NOTICE: R. CRUMB DOES NOT SELL OUT!

R. Crumb, according to this drawing from THE PEOPLE'S COMICS, does not sell out. In the waste basket are offers from ROLLING STONE and PLAYBOY. The latter offer was especially lucrative and Crumb says he enjoyed turning it down. He eventually went commercial, however, and sold the rights to Fritz the Cat to Ralph Bashki and Steve Krantz.

CRUMB: ZAP #0 was stolen. By this guy Zahn.

GREEN: What did you do?

CRUMB: I fortunately had a photostat—the only time I made a photostat of anything—and the whole thing was printed from the photostat.

I never heard from Zahn again. So, when I met Donahue and Charlie Plymell, they printed ZAP #1.

GREEN: Charlie Plymell: Wasn't he from Kansas?

CRUMB: Yeah. He was the guy that printed it. Donahue was just his assistant. Then Plymell split and got out of the printing business and Donahue took over. Plymell just left town. I don't know where he went. He was one of those old beatnik guys.

So, anyway, ZAP #1 came out and was selling for a while. Then I heard that Vincent Moscoso and Rick Griffin were trying to do a comic, so we all got together and put out ZAP #2. Later on, we got together with Spain and then Gilbert Shelton and Robert Williams got involved.

After a while, it got to be a tight thing and other people wanted to get in. It got messy. So there was push to come out more often—so we could all make more money. But nobody wanted to let the other artists in on it so we could have eased the burden of getting the stuff out.

GREEN: Was that the only reason you wanted to get more artists involved?

CRUMB: That and to let the other artists make some more money, because ZAP sold because of the title, you know? Wilson said 'You can't degrade the magazine because the title sells!' I said that we wouldn't necessarily be degrading it because we were letting other artists in. If they were good, it was okay. But who was going to decide on who was a good artist? It got to be a fucking hasle.

I didn't want anything to do with that, so I just washed my hands of the whole business.

GREEN: Later you did some work for Rip-Off Press. What was the story on their operation there. That was an artist co-op riff also, wasn't it?

CRUMB: Jesus! Whew! Naw, it wasn't a co-operative. It was a company in which two artists were involved—Jack Jaxon and Gilbert Shelton. It wasn't mainly their operation. It was just another business.

GREEN: It was always my impression that underground comix sold in spite of themselves.

CRUMB: What do you mean 'in spite of themselves'?

GREEN: It seemed that in every phase of the business operation, the people built walls in front of themselves and then ran into them.

CRUMB: I saw all that happening. I didn't want anything to do with it. When I first did ZAP, and I saw all that coming,

I just said to myself, 'I'm going to draw and hand it over—and have as little to do with the business end as possible.' The only thing I decided to do was to take the comix I drew and spread them around as much as possible to different companies. I don't think any of these people could have handled that.

GREEN: But didn't The Print Mint have the best operation at the time?

CRUMB: Jesus! When we first started ZAP, the first thing Don Schenker wanted us to do was make a contract so that all the comix from then on would be done by The Print Mint. If we'd have gone along with that, that company would have turned into the biggest rip-off tyrants you ever saw!

GREEN: That might be so, but look at Gilbert Shelton and the Freak Brothers. He would have sold many, many more books with The Print Mint.

CRUMB: He sold good.

GREEN: He would have sold more if The Print Mint was doing it. He would have been paid for it, too.

CRUMB: The Print Mint paid the best, that's the truth. They tried pulling some shit all along the line, though. They pulled shit on people and attempted to pull stuff. I don't think they're any more just than anyone else. They're more efficient, though.

GREEN: You said that you wanted to spread your material around. Krupp ended up with some of your work and you ended up with 35,000 comix instead of royalties.

CRUMB: Something like that. Or maybe it was 17,500 comix. They still owe me some money—a couple of thousand.

But most publishers are fuck-ups. I think Rip-Off Press might be getting together now that Dave Moriarity's not in charge there anymore. They're getting pretty efficient. Fred Todd's [the new head of Rip-Off] **pretty efficient.**

GREEN: Especially with that anthology, **THE BEST OF RIP-OFF PRESS.**

CRUMB: I guess they'll do more of those.

GREEN: Are you happy with the underground format, or would you rather see it get into books and things?

CRUMB: Yeah, I really like the cheap format. But anthologies are getting away from that. There's a big push on now to do big, fancy books. Some people don't think the cheap format can make it anymore. Maybe they're right. I don't know. But I really like the cheap format.

I really don't know what will happen. It'd be too bad if the cheap format went, though.

GREEN: Hasn't one of the real problems been that everyone wants a piece of the pie, even when there isn't a pie at 50¢?

CRUMB: Yeah, nobody's going to get rich; nobody ever did get rich. That's what's good about it. But the stores still get a better deal for underground comix than for regular comics. They don't sell as well, that's all.

GREEN: Wilson seems to be making a healthy living for himself as an underground artist.

CRUMB: One of the few. There are a lot of guys that ought to but aren't. Justin Green, Jay Lynch, Kim Deitch, Bill Griffith, Artie Spiegelman. 'Course Artie isn't a very fast artist. He's really slow.

GREEN: His new book, **THE BOOK OF QUOTATIONS,** is really doing well.

CRUMB: Artie Spiegelman will do okay, because he's really an enterprising lad, you know?

GREEN: What about the above-ground publishers. Do you think they lack integrity? How about all the censorship?

CRUMB: Yeah, sure. Somehow, when things get into big money like the above grounds, you automatically get involved in power—economic power and formula stuff.

GREEN: Which is what we were talking about earlier. Formula books like **HAROLD HEDD.** Turner may be coming out with formula books soon. Books everybody knows will sell—even if they're not great.

CRUMB: That isn't too bad. But some guys—like your brother, Justin—draw great. The greatest cartoons. But Justin's work doesn't have too much commercial value. It's just too weird for the average lunkhead.

What's great is when things are prosperous. Then things that aren't commercially successful can be carried. But sometimes things like that get ground under when things get tough, you know? That's the way it goes.

When things are prosperous and things are fairly comfortable, things blossom creatively and more people get a chance to create. With hard times, people get squeezed out, or have a hard time. Their creative potential is limited.

GREEN: Then suddenly, to survive, they have to become commercial hacks?

CRUMB: Some do, some quit, some just keep at it in spite of the struggle. Some get tired of the struggle and sell out. I don't know, some just go under. Some just degenerate.

GREEN: And some just ride it through and get on to other things. Like you're doing now?

CRUMB: I don't know what I'm doing. I'm not doing anything right now.

GREEN: Well, in the first story of **THE PEOPLE'S COMIX,** you're sitting at a desk with rejection slips, saying that R. Crumb doesn't sell out. Do you take as much pleasure out of refusing work as completing it?

CRUMB: Hell yes, that's exactly it. My greatest satisfaction was turning down PLAYBOY's offer.

GREEN: How did you do that? Didn't they offer you a wild week in Jamaica with two foxy dames and a lot of dough or something?

CRUMB: That was OUI magazine. That came later. PLAYBOY offered me a regular gig doing cartoons for them for like $500 a page or something incredible like that.

Michelle [Michelle Urry, **PLAYBOY** cartoon editor] **was enraged. She said 'Some day when the underground fad is over, you'll come crawling back, begging for work.' And she's probably right.** [laughter]

GREEN: Well, do you think the undergrounds have gotten out of hand? Have they become something other than what you originally wanted?

CRUMB: No, it hasn't, gotten out of hand at all. At this point, though, it might. It might ... it might be because of Jim Warren. Some artists will probably resist, some won't.

Richard Corben sold out to Jim Warren. Jesus!

Crumb eventually became disenchanted with the Fritz the Cat deal and killed off the character in a 1973 strip entitled "Fritz the Cat Superstar."

WELL, I THINK IT'LL BE OUR BIGGEST SUCCESS SINCE THE FIRST "FRITZ" FILM! THIS STORY IS ONE IN A MILLION, RIGHT, RALPHY, BABE?!
GRUNT
RIGHT, STEVIE!! TH' YOUTH MARKET'LL LOVE IT! AND YOU'LL BE BIGGER THAN EVER AFTER "FRITZ GOES TO INDIA" HITS TH' THEATRES!!
Copyright © by R. Crumb. Reprinted with permission.

In this panel, Crumb lampoons both Bashki and Krantz who were the prime movers of the Fritz movie.

GREEN: Wasn't that in the offing, though? It seems that was what Corben's style was all about, anyway. It was always catering to a particular crowd. It was the poor man's science-fiction movie production.

CRUMB: I don't know. Corben's stuff was great. He put stuff into his comix that the overground press wouldn't print, you know?

GREEN: Aside from breasts and genitals, what?

CRUMB: Well that, that's enough. That's what the overground wouldn't print. He's probably going to have to censor himself a little bit now.

GREEN: That's the one point about underground comix that people dig. The total freedom. Like **WEIRD FANTASIES,** that 50¢ all-color book. When you open it up, the first shot had a breast on it—a half naked chick. And then, at one point, some girl snapped her bra and her tits flopped open. That was what made it underground.

CRUMB: You can't criticize the idea of complete freedom or artistic freedom, of course. Some people are going to take advantage of that. But, Jesus, you can't

knock that, either. When that goes, it's kaput. It's a whole different ball game, then.

GREEN: What was the story on that poster, **SCIENCE FICTION FUNNIES.** I'm told that was a jam session project.

CRUMB: It was one of Moscoso's things. One of his friends, John Milliken, had a video-tape machine. This guy had the idea of making it big with video-tapes. He had us do this strip in front of a machine. It was dumb, really embarrassing.

GREEN: Were the working conditions that bad?

CRUMB: We got together with a big page of panels and cut it up into strips and everybody worked on a panel.

GREEN: Just slapped it together?

CRUMB: Yeah, and it turned out totally chaotic. I didn't like it much. I went along with it even though I don't like jam sessions much. Bizarre shit. I don't know. There was no way you could make it less chaotic with all those artists and all those particular styles. Gilbert Shelton tried to make it less chaotic by saying 'Let's make a story line out of it, and everybody do a part of it.' But that didn't make it any better. Nobody would agree on story line. Everybody's approach was so different and it was total chaos.

But my interest in the comic book business is kind of minimal right now.

GREEN: Was the turning point **BLACK AND WHITE** comix?

CRUMB: That was the last comic book I did. I don't know. The turning point came rather slowly. I just lost enthusiasm for it. It may come back. I don't know.

GREEN: It seems that when you started **BLACK AND WHITE,** you thought the comic book readers were jaded, that they had come to expect a certain style from you.

CRUMB: I was jaded. It was getting harder and harder to do stuff, to do cartooning.

GREEN: You were under the gun to just get books out?

CRUMB: Not that. I still liked the thing. I don't know.

GREEN: Well, did you ever have a goal right there in front of you as you were doing the book or was it simply development?

CRUMB: Just development. As soon as that stops, it's formula time, you know? When that comes, that's just when I lose interest.

GREEN: That's what I was referring to about **BLACK AND WHITE.** It was anti-formula. Fritz the Cat was really snappy, curvy. But the squirrels in **BLACK AND WHITE** were jaded.

It seems to me your work was always in a particular style. You could always tell Robert Crumb when you saw it. But this one went against the Crumb style.

CRUMB: Oh, yeah? Interesting observations. I don't know. It was hard to draw that comic, though. It took me a long time to finish it.

GREEN: Do you think that all of the work you do is up to your standards? Sometimes do you sluff off? For example, compare that Mr. Natural '719th Meditation' to 'The Desperate Character' that was in **ZAP** #6. They seemed to be a dichotomy.

CRUMB: They do? In what way?

GREEN: Both were double entendres, but on different levels. It seems that the amount of work it took to formulate the meditation story was much more painstaking than the other.

CRUMB: Quite the contrary, my dear fellow. The Mr. Natural story was quite easy to do. It just required drawing Mr. Natural over and over again, sitting in the desert in the same position.

What it really gets down to, though, is how much god-damned sweat are you willing to put into a drawing? Do you feel like sweating over the drawing board? Anybody can think up ideas, you know?

GREEN: What about when somebody copies your style?

CRUMB: I become enraged. I go around breaking furniture. [laughter]

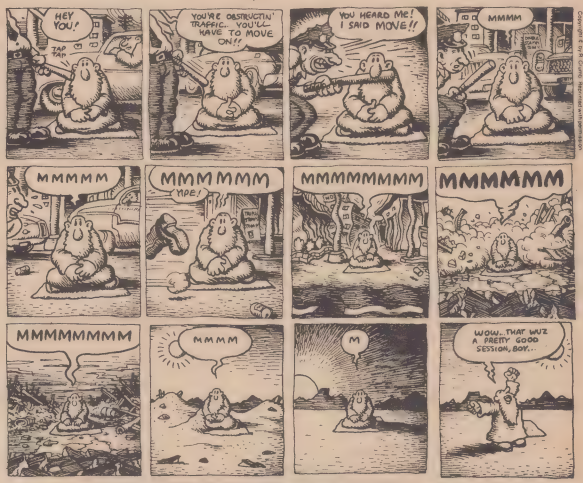
Well, actually, it's flattery.

GREEN: I remember writing letters to Don Donahue telling him about Mr. Natural pillows or a Mr. Natural trading post in Arizona that signs their letters 'Naturally yours.'

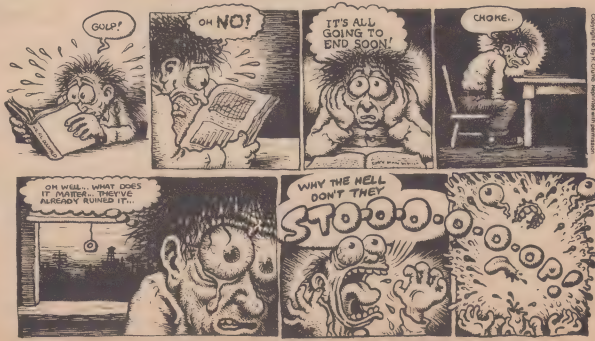
CRUMB: No kidding? That's cool!

GREEM: Then why do you send Albert [**Albert Morse, Crumb's lawyer**] chasing after them?

CRUMB: He's only going after people like J.C. Penney and he's doing that stuff



"Mr. Natural's 719th Meditation" (above) from MR. NATURAL comics and "The Desperate Character" from ZAP #6.



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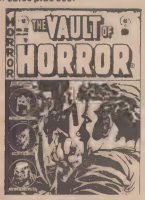

P.47. VAULT OF HORROR. 22" by 28" poster in full color by Johnny Craig. This is the famous **Seduction of the innocent** cover in its uncensored version. $2.00 plus 50c.

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	P.58	$5.00	
	P.34	$2.00	
	P.35	$2.50	
	P.61	$2.50	
	P.56	$5.00	
	P.51	$2.00	

HOW MANY	POSTER NUMBER	PRICE (INC. POSTAGE)	TOTAL PRICE
	P.60	$1.45	
	P.45	$2.50	
	P.48	$2.50	
	P.47	$2.50	
	P.50	$2.00	
	P.44	$2.50	
	P.36	$2.50	
		TOTAL	

so I can get some money. I'm not getting paid a cent for any comix I've done. All the money I'm living off now is the money Albert gets by bothering people who've been ripping off 'Keep on Truckin!' That's the way I'm living.

GREEN: What happened with the money from **FRITZ THE CAT**?

CRUMB: I got some money. I got $10,000.

GREEN: But you didn't see the stuff before it was released?

CRUMB: I didn't have anything to do with the production of it. I was railroaded on that deal.

GREEN: Monied interests from the East? Or Hollywood?

CRUMB: Both. Monied interests in the East who moved to Hollywood!

GREEN: But right now you're just hibernating, looking for inspiration?

CRUMB: No, I'm not hibernating as you can see. I don't know. I'm just resting on my laurels, I guess.

GREEN: Now what do people ask you when they interview you?

CRUMB: What do they ask you? They ask me things like, 'When did you first think up Mr. Natural?' They ask me, 'When did you first start drawing cartoons?,' 'Who are my favorite cartoonists from the past who influence me?,' 'Were you influenced by L.S.D.?' And on and on and on.

GREEN: Well, did you get into music after your interests in comix waned?

CRUMB: When I started doing music? No! I've always been ... When I was 12 years old, I brought a plastic Arthur Godfrey ukelele!

GREEN: And it's been uphill ever since?

CRUMB: Or downhill!

GREEN: What happened to those records that you pressed at...

CRUMB: A flop. The kids out there won't buy 78 r.p.m. records. They probably don't know what to do with the 78 r.p.m. speed on their record players. That's the problem.

GREEN: There's also a big problem getting vinyl, too.

CRUMB: Yeah, but that's a whole new thing that happened since I got out of the record business.

GREEN: Didn't you do a third album for Apex?

CRUMB: There were two more records in the works, but I think they're being shelved for the time being.

There were some beautiful graphics worked out for Donahue's one, too. It's sad they didn't get printed. The one I did for Donahue was nice, the best I ever did. The music was good, too.

GREEN: So what will you be doing now? More 78 r.p.m. records?

CRUMB: Nah, getting the farm together is the biggest thing on my mind. The way things are going, I want to get this place workable so we can make some of our survival off it. At least so it'll support itself and me. □

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OFFICIAL BALLOT 1973 COMIC ART FAN AWARDS

1. FAVORITE PROFESSIONAL ARTIST (Any artist, based on work published in magazines distributed on newsstands. Can be penciller, inker, colorist, etc.)

2. FAVORITE PROFESSIONAL WRITER (Any writer, based on work published in magazines distributed on the newsstand.)

3. FAVORITE PROFESSIONAL EDITOR (Any editor of a newsstand comic book.)

4. FAVORITE PROFESSIONAL COMIC BOOK (Any kind—romance, funny animal, etc. Black and white magazine or color. Definition of "professional" is not that it is money-making, but of nationwide newsstand distribution. Vote for title of comic, not issue number.)

5. FAVORITE NON-NEWSSTAND COMIC BOOK (Any comic art book which doesn't appear widely on newsstands; this can be fanzines with much comic art, underground comix or mail-order art from professionals. Vote for title, not issue number.)

6. FAVORITE COMIC BOOK STORY (Any length, so long as it appears in one comic; only an installment of a serial would be eligible. Stories found in comics of category five classification are eligible.)

7. FAVORITE COMIC BOOK CHARACTER (A member of a group, a solo character or some supporting character; again, category five characters are eligible.)

8. FAVORITE FANZINE (A fanzine is any comics-related and non-newsstand publication; it can be small or large circulation, printed or dittoed. It can be a newsletter, ad fanzine, article fanzine or whatever else that does not fit into category five. Vote for fanzine title, not issue number.)

9. FAVORITE FAN WRITER (Scripter, article writer, editor or whatever you please; based on work not in newsstand publications.)

10. FAVORITE FAN ARTIST (Spot illustrator, strip artist, underground cartoonist, etc.; based on work not for newsstand distribution.)

Please list the source of your ballot here:

INSIDE COMICS

Sign your name and type or print your name underneath your signature.

1973 COMIC ART FAN AWARDS INSTRUCTIONS

This is the 13th year of the comic art fan awards; it is for newsstand work dated 1973 and for non-newsstand work copyrighted or published in 1973. Anything except all-reprint work is eligible—but it must be from 1973.

THIS BALLOT MUST BE MAILED BY APRIL 1, 1974.

This ballot is authorized to appear only in a limited number of publications. These are: THE BUYER'S GUIDE, THE COMIC READER, INSIDE COMICS, THE MENOMONEE FALLS GAZETTE, THE MENOMONEE FALLS GUARDIAN and THE ROCKET'S BLAST-COMICOLLECTOR. Only official ballots will be counted.

If you do not wish to deface your copy of these publications, or if you do not receive any of them, we will send you an official ballot. Please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope and a ballot will be forwarded. No request for ballot without self-addressed, stamped envelope can be honored. Send your requests to: **1973 COMIC ART FAN AWARDS, Tony Isabella, 5455 Kings Highway, #4A, Brooklyn, New York 11203.**

We regret the necessity of this action, but last year's unfortunate ballot-stuffing (by one individual) made such precautions necessary. We deeply regret any inconvenience. Naturally, we will not count ballots we deem to be fake. But we promise to count all ballots that we are not absolutely certain are fakes.

There will only be one ballot this year. There being next to no change in the winners between the nominating ballot and the final ballot last year, we have opted to reduce our workload and speed up our getting the results to you.

On the other hand, we are not adverse to changing back to the two ballot system if enough requests are made. We are also prepared to add a "Best Inker" category if enough requests are made. In answering your ballot, please let us know your feelings on these two matters. We will act on them for next year's ballot.

We also hope to turn over the Comic Art Fan Awards to a board of administrators next year. Your suggestions are welcomed.

We (being Tony Isabella) are also removing ourselves from competition in all categories to insure complete fairness in counting the ballots. As always, our records are open to responsible persons who wish to double-check the results.

Final results will be mailed in late April to the magazines in which this ballot appears. In addition, copies of the results will be available for a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Thanks for your cooperation and happy balloting.

Sincerely yours, Tony Isabella, Awards Administrator.

ALL BALLOTS MUST BE MAILED BY APRIL 1, 1974. Send your ballots to: COMIC ART FAN AWARDS, Tony Isabella, 5455 Kings Highway, #4A, Brooklyn, New York 11203.

Flacks and Hacks at ACBA

by Doug Murray

"Tony Isabella moved that a list of paid members be read at the general meeting and this was carried ... but it wasn't done, after all."

"The agenda for the [general ACBA] meeting was worked out. This was interrupted when Elliot Maggin spilled hot chocolate in his lap (It had nothing to do with the meeting, but a vote of the board put it into the minutes)."

—minutes, ACBA Board of Governors meeting, October 11, 1973

"Dick Giordano suggested that our strongest committee should be one on membership. He himself volunteered to be on it, as did Elliot Maggin. Several other names were mentioned, including Jim Starlin, who will be offered the chairmanship, with a provision that he attend board meetings."

—minutes, ACBA Board of Governors meeting, November 2, 1973

In **CATCH 22**, Joseph Heller advanced a classic example of Army lunacy: you can't get an insanity discharge if you apply for an insanity discharge, because applying for an insanity discharge means you know you're insane; and you can't be insane if you know you're insane.

And Groucho Marx once said that he could get you ten years in Levenworth, eleven years in Twelveworth or five years in Woolworth.

Somewhere between Joseph Heller and Groucho Marx lies The Academy of Comic Book Arts (ACBA), the four year old guild of comic writers, artists and editors. Started with all good intentions in 1969, ACBA has never been a very potent force in the comic industry. Lately, despite the best efforts of President Neal Adams, the Academy has become a useless social club at best and a bumbling example of comic book incompetency at worst.

ACBA was originally formed for two primary reasons. Firstly, to help free-lancers find better positions with the comic companies; secondly, to help those free-lancers already working to improve their lot. Four years later, ACBA is still striving to make those initial steps. In an industry notorious in its need of personnel, ACBA has made almost no progress.

Soon after its formation, the Academy formed a "job pool" enabling the companies to have a ready source of high grade talent available on short notice. This pool soon led to the hiring of many artists on a permanent basis and eventually the formation of company shops—groups of artists working solely for, and earning all their income from, one company. This inadvertant and unexpected development drastically undermined what little power ACBA had developed.

As an organization, ACBA today remains a trade guild, accepting new

LION AND THE LAMB: Academy President Neal Adams (left) is regarded as the most vociferous artist in the comics industry today. On the other hand, ACBA Secretary E. Nelson Bridwell has the reputation of being a gentle soul. Still, he forced activist Sal Amendola into relinquishing the Secretary's job.

members only after having sold two or more stories to a comic company. This prevents flash in the pan contributors from joining the organization. Ostensibly, with this group of working professionals in the organization, ACBA should accumulate great power. An Academy generated strike should close down the comic book companies.

This isn't the case, however, Since a high percentage of the ACBA members are house professionals—many made that way by the ACBA job pool—the guild is almost without effectiveness. People whose sole source of income and employment comes from one company are fearful of their positions. Consequently, they aren't apt to take controversial stands against their company's economic interests. Even if a controversial stand is the necessary action.

This timidity in dealing with adverse corporate decisions was illustrated only several months ago when Marvel announced a new art policy. Marvel began requiring their artists to draw one page of every story sideways, thus allowing them to use one less page per story. (And pay for one less page per story.) To compound the matter, this new directive was announced while Marvel was publically claiming they had become the world's best selling comic book line.

Many of ACBA's free-lance members were outraged at this cost-cutting maneuver and brought the matter to the attention of the Academy's Board of Governors. Despite free-lance pressure, however, the Board adopted a "wait and see" attitude.

No final decision has ever been made.

One look at the board's make-up would explain the Board's inaction. Of the nine members, three worked outright and solely for Marvel (John Romita, Marie Severin and Gerry Conway), three were writers not substantially affected by the page cut (Elliot Maggin, Steve Skeates and E. Nelson Bridwell) and another was Flo Steinberg, who neither writes nor draws.

A similar situation developed when it was disclosed that more than 1900 pages of original artwork were stolen from National Comics. Many ACBA members had long felt that any artwork held by National was being kept illegally, and that the theft of the material was an appropriate time to press the matter to conclusion.

When the theft came up at a board meeting, however, it was decided to forgo any statement.

In most organizations, executive intransigence of that nature would cause a rank-and-file revolt. The free-lancers, who were the reason for the founding of the Academy in the first place, were being stepped on by both major companies, but twice the ACBA Board of Governors failed to act. But the apathy and ignorance of the free-lancers, coupled with the shoddy and unprofessional conditions that surround their general meetings, preclude any such uprising. In fact, the typical ACBA "general" meeting of members is a sham.

Most general meetings are slated for an 8 p.m. start at the Illustrator's Club in Manhattan. Members, usually accompanied by wifes or girlfriends, arrive about seven and use the free time to browse through the Club's large display of original art. Or they frequent the always open Club bar. Those members whose dues are not paid are required to make a $5 contribution at the door. This usually deters the younger, poorer members—those with the most problems—from attending the meeting.

The meeting begins with a reading of the minutes from the previous gathering, followed by a quick summary of any intervening Board of Governors meetings. This is followed by a prepared program, much similar to convention-style panels. Company executives and famous comic personalities give a prepared talk on some facet of the industry. They also field usually inconsequential questions before retiring. The tough questions are rarely asked.

Following the presentations—which have a strict time limit—the meeting breaks up into scattered cliques of gossiping friends.

This concept is, of course, a total disaster. The general meetings are slanted in such a way that they invariably become social events rather than forums where the serious business of tending to the Academy is handled. Members are encouraged by the time limit on presentations and the open bar to turn any meeting into a sprawling social function.

In addition, the only time that most of the membership is present at a meeting is on the occasion of the ACBA Banquet. It's the time for members to sit around, have a meal and congratulate themselves on their work of the previous year. The meeting begins early, again with an open bar, and again with general socializing. Following an address by the Academy president—which is of the "Look how far we've come" ilk—special awards are handed out.

The awards, called **SHAZAM** awards, are given for excellence in writing, drawing and editing. Unlike most awards, however, the winner has to pay for the honor. Because ACBA is always in a state of near-bankruptcy, any recipient of a **SHAZAM** is charged for the laminating of his award plaque (The charge usually runs about $35; as of last October, 16 **SHAZAM** awards remain unpaid.)

PEAS IN A POD: Former Academy Vice President John Romita (left) resigned and was replaced by artist Herb Trimpe. Both, however, are Marvel house men. Romita is the defacto art director at Marvel and Trimpe draws solely for Romita's books.

The awards are voted on by members of the Academy, both working professionals and supporting (fan) members. The object is to provide a more impartial system than the annual Comic Art Fan Awards, the feeling being that a judgment by peers carries more weight than a judgment of fans. Many professionals feel fans are too easily swayed by political moves, personalities and the like. At the same time, however, most any member will admit officers are elected strictly on a personality basis.

After all the awards have been given out, the banquet again disintegrates into a round of social drinking and private discussion. Besides being the only meeting where most working members are in attendance, this is the only meeting where supporting members are welcome. (Supporting members cannot vote on ACBA policy either.) Which is strange, since the supporting members pick up most of the tab for running the organization.

The inactivity at the general meetings leaves a heavy burden upon the Board of Governors. Unfortunately, they aren't much more diligent. In fact, the organization doesn't even have a headquarters. They work out of artist Neal Adams' mid-Manhattan studio.

Besides lending his studio to ACBA, Adams is the current president and prime mover of the group. He is a crusader at heart and probably the single most active member of the laconic Academy. His ability to earn a living outside the comic field (he has a lucrative advertising and design business) allows him great latitude in his relations with the comic industry. He's the staunchest critic of the large companies and is not adverse to using his personal power—as intellectual guru to a group of the industry's younger talent—to gain concessions from the comic producers.

This dual position of president and father-figure to younger professionals gives Adams as much strength as any free-lancer can currently muster. Whatever concessions ACBA has won from the comic companies (an insurance plan for free-lancers, an upcoming decision on reprint rates and Marvel's decision to return original art) comes mainly from Adams' personal prestige. In fact, ACBA is so clearly dependent upon the energy, initiative and drive of Neal Adams, his position is secure for years to come.

Adams' great power is balanced by his realization that however he might feel towards a subject, he may not be speaking for the entire ACBA membership. For this reason, he often refrains from taking any stand as ACBA president until he gets a clear mandate from his Board of Governors.

Which is where the ACBA machinery breaks down. Collectively, the board is weak, spineless and almost useless. Many of the members are frightened of voting against the company they work for. Conflict-of-interest runs rampant. Many are too timid to stand up for what they believe in. And others just don't care.

Part of the problem with the Board of Governors lies with ACBA's founding. It was originated and guided in its early going by Stan Lee (now Marvel publisher) and Carmine Infantino (now National publisher). They set the "big name" precedent and most board members continue to be elected strictly because of the familiarity of their names; or, worse, because of the power they hold at some comic company.

John Romita, until recently the organization's vice-president, is a typical example. Well-known and well-liked around the industry, the easy-going Romita was elected without much serious thought.

Romita's vice-presidency was a disaster, however, both philosophically and mechanically. Since the middle of the 1960's, after he was dropped from National's romance department, Romita has worked solely for Marvel Comics. In recent months he's become the de facto art director. As much as Editor Roy Thomas, Production Manager John Verporten and Publisher Lee, Romita determines who will draw for Marvel comics. That position made him a solid Marvel man, totally unable to fairly arbitrate in matters concerning Marvel.

Romita became the top Marvel flack on the board and effectively cancelled the Academy's ability to move against Marvel when situations warranted. Many times, he was voting to uphold a Marvel policy he had a voice in formulating.

Pleading overwork, Romita eventually began ignoring board meetings to avoid messy conflict-of-interest charges. Finally, under great pressure, Romita resigned.

The new vice-president, however, comes from the same mold. Instead of procuring the services of a hard-charging, reform-minded free-lancer, ACBA chose Herb Trimpe, another Marvel company man. Although younger and more inclined towards reform, Trimpe is still a strong Marvel company man. Because he works solely for Marvel, he is as reluctant as Romita was to vote against the better Marvel corporate interests.

An even more Kafka-esque situation exists at the Secretary's post. Until several months ago, Sal Amendola, a fiery artist under Neal Adams' influence, was the group's secretary. In a blatantly political move, E. Nelson Bridwell has supplanted Amendola. Bridwell, a National writer/editor, is a strong National company man. His obvious

MORE MARVELMANIA: ACBA Board of Governors member Gerry Conway (left) has restricted his comics writing to books published by Marvel. Academy Treasurer Marie Severin heads Marvel's coloring department. Neither have gone out on a limb to vote against Marvel at crucial times.

conflict-of-interest notwithstanding, Bridwell has assumed Amendola's post and seat on the Board of Governors.

Even stranger is that, despite his ouster, Amendola still handles the distribution of the **ACBA NEWSLETTER**. As Lewis Carroll would say, "Curiouser and curiouser..."

To complete the conflict-of-interest menage-a-trois is Treasurer Marie Severin. While her office is almost powerless (the organization is nearly always operated on a shoestring), she holds one seat on the Board of Governors. And although generally regarded as the top colorist of the field, she's currently the head of Marvel's coloring department. That gives her as much stake in upholding existing corporate policy at Trimpe and Bridwell.

With all this company kow-towing, it isn't difficult to see why ACBA gets so little work done. Unfortunately, the remaining board members aren't much better.

Until recently, artist Dick Giordano was a strong member. He was a sidekick of Adams' and just as much a maverick. His ability to work for any company, or even switch to advertising work, gave him tremendous flexibility. Unfortunately, Giordano now lives in Connecticut and misses many meetings. His seat usually goes to a less well-situated, thus more conservative, ACBA member.

Steve Skeates is young, unattached and enough of a loner to vote as conscience demands. Although he is primarily a National scripter, he can and will often work for other outfits at regular intervals. His only problem is that he is considered a political lightweight.

Elliot Maggin is in much the same position as Skeates. He's young and relatively new to comics. Although he's only worked for National, his talent is widely recognized and he could easily work for any company. He has the necessary freedom both inside and outside the field—he's attending columbia Graduate School of Journalism and doesn't plan to make comic books his career—to be an independent voice. But he often lets his enthusiasm cloud his judgment and misses many meetings for purely personal reasons.

Flo Steinberg is the board's most financially independent member. She works in a production capacity for The Warren Publishing Company, but also does a considerable amount of free-lance work outside the comic field. However, she demands total oversight of a problem and wants every minute detail before committing herself. This usually leads her to abstain from voting.

The last Board member, Gerry Conway, isn't as free as writing cohorts Maggin and Skeates. Despite establishing himself as a talented science fiction writer, Conway is as much a Marvel company man as Romita, Severin and Trimpe. His loyalties, thus mixed, makes him less than a fair and objective board member.

The Board, as presently constituted, rarely acts. And when it does, it usually does so incoherently and in total opposition to the Academy's best interests.

Just before the 1973 New York Comic Art Convention, the board was discussing an upcoming fund-raising drive. One proposal under consideration entailed charging fans for convention sketches drawn by ACBA professionals.

The main thrust was to forbid ACBA artists from doing free drawings at the July 4th and successive fanclaves. Instead, each artist would be hearded into a ballroom. He would then be required to charge for each sketch he drew—half of the money going to the artist, the other half going to ACBA coffers.

Amazingly, after a long debate, the proposal passed. Although it was a clear infringement on the rights of member artists (not to mention making them bear the burden of Academy fund-raising), the proposal became official ACBA policy in time for the 1973 convention season.

Many artists, who resented being told how and when to move around at a convention, were indignent. Unfortunately, the Board of Governors is staffed by five writers and four artists. In fact, the night the vote was taken, artist Herb Trimpe was absent and replaced by another writer.

As a compromise, the money raised was placed in the Bill Everett Fund, the Academy's charitable pool, and a crisis was avoided.

An incident of similar dimensions is still raging, however. National Editor Joe Orlando had printed several pictures of the ACBA Awards Dinner in the king size **HOUSE OF MYSTERY** magazine. Although he had received permission from then-Secretary Sal Amendola, no one bothered to clear their usage with photographer Michele Wolfman. Nor did Orlando give ACBA the photo credit line he had promised.

Michele Wolfman has not yet been paid for the pictures, either by National, Orlando, ACBA or Amendola. The Academy, embarrassed by the faux pas, has since adopted a motion stating that "Any material published by the Academy is the property of the creator and will be defended as such."

And when an organization such as ACBA, founded to protect the rights of creative people, has to protect those same people from the organization founded to protect them, Joseph Heller would call that **CATCH 22.** □

FREE BUT FUTILE: ACBA Board of Governors members Steve Skeates (left) and Flo Steinberg are the least restricted members. Skeates writes from National and Warren and Steinberg works only in a production capacity. Neither, however, are considered political heavies in the ACBA power structure.

INSIDE BOOKS

THE WORLD OF FANZINES
by Fredric Wertham, M.D.
Southern Illinois University Press, $10

In the midst of the current vogue of 1950's nostalgia—this massive regurgitation of sock-hops, Butch Wax and Sha Na Na—there is also a natural nostalgia about the era's comic books. Fans most notably recall the defunct EC line—**MAD** being the sole survivor—which relied heavily on horror comics.

Many EC fans are of the mind that their favored company was dealt a death blow by the rampaging, near-hysterical anti-comics movement of the McCarthy years; a movement personified by Dr. Fredric Wertham and nurtured by his book, **SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT** (Simon and Schuster, 1953 and Kennikat Press, 1971).

Dr. Wertham's **SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT** examined comic books and their effects on children. Among his theories was the postulation that nothing but evil would come of comic reading adolescents. Indeed, a believer in the conclusions expounded by **SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT** might believe all comic readers develop into juvenile delinquents, criminals and/or rapists.

When the horror fad spawned by EC ran its course—whether aided by Dr. Wertham's work or not—the comic publishers eventually returned to the super-hero comics, which had been standard fare of the 1940's. And with the super-hero came a fan press. While EC had inspired a few flashes of fanzine publishing, super-hero comics produced a tidal wave of amateur publications; and these comic-oriented fan products quickly outnumbered their older science fiction counterparts.

Dr. Wertham's second comics-oriented book, **THE WORLD OF FANZINES**, provides an interesting look at the fan press which developed in the 1960's. Subtitled "A Special Form of Communication," it is a tribute to non-profit personalized publishing and a perceptive and positive view of comic book and science fiction fanzines. He briefly summarizes early fanzine history, presents a most untypical gallery of fanzine art and devotes the balance of

the book to quoting and itemizing fanzine content.

Dr. Wertham is mightily impressed with fanzines and their spontaneity. He sees them as the ultimate expression of freedom of the press, unhampered by the restrictions of having to appeal to mass audiences for survival. Dr. Wertham writes that "publishing them [fanzines] is not a business but an avocation. Sensationalism for the sake of sales, which mass publications indulge in, is foreign to them."

The doctor makes a generally engaging presentation as to what fanzines are—in a manner aimed for the interested layman. His book is well-researched and surprisingly objective for a man who has long been libeled and villified by fanzines and fan writers. The book is not, however, without two noticeable and disturbing flaws.

Firstly, even though book prices have been skyrocketing along with everything else, $10 is unreasonable for a book that contains only 154 pages—a dozen of which are end and title pages. Fans who are mentioned in the book will probably purchase it, but the price destines **THE WORLD OF FANZINES** to a regrettably small circulation among fanzine readers.

Secondly, while Dr. Wertham's research is generally accurate, it was done several years ago and is now severely dated. With the constant turmoil of fanzine publishing, those several years might as well be several decades. Most of the fanzines mentioned are long since gone with no similar ventures in their stead.

Indeed, since Dr. Wertham researched **THE WORLD OF FANZINES**, fanzine publishing has changed; the small circulation personal fanzines that the doctor found so appealing simply do not exist anymore. They've been replaced by high-price, low-personality art magazines which rely heavily on professional contributions. In fact, it is almost impossible to find a currently published product which fits Dr. Wertham's description.

For this reason, **THE WORLD OF FANZINES** serves better as a eulogy than a history. Some of the science fiction fanzines alluded to still remain, but are now of less importance. Most of the comic fanzines mentioned and studied have been replaced by those art magazines, which are totally alien to the doctor's concept. In short, the fanzine publishing phenomenon Dr. Wertham so warmly applauds no longer exists; it has been replaced by a totally different fan concept.

These flaws aside, **THE WORLD OF FANZINES** provides a good history of the fandom that once existed. The fanzines Dr. Wertham wrote of have made significant and integral contributions to the progress of comic art as a true art form. If nothing else, the existence of those fanzines provide the positive by-product Dr. Wertham's **SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT** said would never develop from reading comic books.

Fanzines, of the ilk Dr. Wertham described, were the bastion of the fascinating underground network known nebulously as "fandom." It has taken a psychiatrist, long-attacked by self-same fanzines, to explain what was so wonderful about them.

And if the irony of **that** situation doesn't absolutely overwhelm you, try this: for all the fanzines' attempts to rebut Dr. Wertham's earlier claim—that no good ever comes out of comic books—the best rebuttal has been authored by Dr. Wertham himself in **THE WORLD OF FANZINES.**

Mull that over as you dust off your old EC collection.

– Mark Evanier

Dr. Fredric Wertham as drawn by illustrator William Auerbach-Levy for the dustjacket of THE WORLD OF FANZINES.

GEORGE

STATEMENT OF INTENT:

GEORGE will endeavor to review every available fanzine and related item of interest. It restricts itself to reviews of limited edition magazines and products—items not usually available on newsstands. **GEORGE** will **NOT** review underground comix, black and white comic magazines or color comics issued by the professional comic book companies.

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TO GET YOUR PRODUCT REVIEWED BY GEORGE:

Simply send a copy of your fanzine or related item to **GEORGE** at the following address: **INSIDE COMICS**, Attn: **GEORGE**, 11 West 17 Street, New York, New York 10011.

If the fanzine's policy is not to issue review copies, please contact **GEORGE** at the above address with the following information: title of item, price and address where a copy can be purchased.

GEORGE greatly appreciates review copies of items it will consider. However, complementary review copies and copies purchased by **GEORGE** are treated equally, without favoritism. In most cases, the reviewer will not be aware of whether the fanzine has been purchased or if it was sent without charge.

THE GEORGE STAFF:

GEORGE's staff is comprised of four reviewers: Ron Harris, Bob Napier, Art Scott and Jim Schoonover. All reviews are initialed by the writer at the end of the copy.

HOW GEORGE REVIEWS:

For simplicity's sake, all fanzines reviewed are assumed to be 8½" by 11" in size, printed photo-offset or offset, bound by saddle-stitch technique and mailed flat in an envelope. All variations from this "standard" will be noted within the review.

Preceding each review will be a bold-faced legend of information; each legend gives the: **FANZINE TITLE** and **NUMBER**; single copy price (subscription rates, if available); page count (interior pages only except where indicated); if different from "standard"); frequency (if stated); editor (if known); usage of color; ordering information; general description.

All fanzines are grouped into three broad categories: general interest fanzines; newspaper strip fanzine newspapers; and reprint fanzines. Reviewable items other than fanzines are grouped in a fourth category.

GENERAL INTEREST FANZINES:

COLOUR YOUR DREAMS; $1.50; 28 pages; Robert Lewis and Joel Pollock, editors; order from: Capital City Comix / P.O. Box 370 / Springfield, Va. 22150; art portfolio or coloring book—take your pick.

Honest, this is a coloring book. It took me a long time to come to the realization, but I'm glad I did. There are 30 full-page illustrations here and each one cries out to be colored. So, overcoming a life-long conditioning—Don't you dare ever write or color in our nice books!—I took out my colored pencils and began to embellish several of the drawings. Not only did I enjoy myself, but the colors actually enhanced the art.

This is a fun book. The artists range from old masters of the past to the newest of newcomers. Pitz, Pyle, Schoonover, St. John, Ball, Rackham, Lindsay, Parrish and Krenkel represent the classic artists. Jones, Wrightson, Kaluta, Simonson, Cockrum, Hickman, Chaykin, Barry Smith, Nally and Fujitake show us the new styles. There are also a number of fair to good fan artists represented. Subject matter ranges across a spectrum of beautiful women, monsters and barbarians, beautiful women, fairy tale people and even beautiful women.

Whether or not you can muster the courage to apply tints to this beautiful book is up to you. I managed it and it was a blast. And I even managed to stay inside the lines! **—J.V.**

COMIC COLLECTOR #14; 75¢; 36 pages; Martin L. Greim, editor; order from: Martin L. Greim / Box 132 / Dedham, Mass. 02026; comic fanzine.

The theme for this issue of **COMIC CRUSADER** is "Magicians in Comics" and is carried through by articles on Ibis (by Raymond Miller), Mr. Mystic (by Tom Fagan), a capsule history of the Prize **BLACK MAGIC** comic (by Bob Cosgrove) and an interview with Fred Fredericks, the artist on **MANDRAKE** (by **Martin Greim**). Also accompanying these articles are numerous full page and spot illustrations and even a two page comic strip depicting the origin of Ibis. The art is generally good and does capture the flavor of the original strips as they appeared in the Golden Age. The articles are accurate and interesting, to old and new collectors alike. Fredericks interview covers only two pages, but it is well done and expanded into a six page format with the addition of photos and Fredericks' art and an introduction by Marty Greim.

There are two other main features in the magazine: a short dissertation on the "Art of Penciling" by Bob Cosgrove, illustrated with two Kirby **DEMON** pencil drawings and Jim Simonson's interpretation of Ms. Wonder Woman divesting herself of the Comic Code, among other things; the second is a new strip, "Sorcerer's Apprentice Series," and is yet another attempt to impress his myopic views of right and wrong on the reader.

Covers are by Dennis Fujitake/William Black and Wendy Pini. Interior illustrations are by Dennis Fujitake, Don Newton, Keith Fukumitsu, Gary Kato, Marty Greim, Tom Fagan, Gary, Wayne Pond and even a little spot drawing by Carlos Gimenez. The overall effect of the zine is pleasant and informative. Definitely a worthwhile magazine for the price. **—J.V.**

COMIC MEDIA #10; 75¢; 40 pages; order from: Charles Swift / 4718 N. 9th Street / Philadelphia, Pa. 19141; English comics fanzine.

COMIC MEDIA is a well-produced English fanzine devoted to fact and opinion about comics from both sides of the Atlantic. The tenth issue highlights a 1950 "Spirit" story by Will Eisner. Eisner's typically unorthodox tale is a little more interesting because it deals with the tribulations of a comic artist. Second billing goes to a 4-page interview with the artist and the writer of **THE SEEKERS**, a British adventure strip. Their words offer insight into the considerable differences between the American and English approaches to newspaper comics. Accompanying the interview is the first installment of a **SEEKERS** science fiction adventure. Art and script are adequate, though not great. Another serialized English strip, the incomplete **MODESTY BLAISE**, concludes in this issue.

The text portion of **COMIC MEDIA** consists of refreshingly thoughtful reviews of both comics-oriented books and science fiction novels. A short history of science fiction in the 1950's, a stodgy proposition for the scientific analysis of comics as a mass medium and a too-brief opinion page round out the book.

With such a variety of good material and its intelligent approach to the subject, **COMIC MEDIA** can't help but be a great buy at 75¢. Equally nice is the fact that with **CM**, the "next issue" actually appears and one needn't fear missing the conclusions to the serialized strips. **—R.H.**

COMIXSCENE #6; 75¢; 24 pages total; 11¼"" by 16½"; Gary Brown and Ken Bruzenak, editors, Jim Steranko, executive editor; bi-monthly; order from: Supergraphics / Box 445 / Wyomissing, Pa. 19610; news and article fanzine.

When Jim Steranko, noted comic art innovator and self-promoter, announced that he was going to produce a bi-monthly newszine, there were hosannas from all quarters of fandom. Nearly everyone expected that Steranko's connections with the publishers would give him the best pipeline to news available; that he would use his graphics talent to produce a first-rate package.

A year later that promise has not been fulfilled, and the zine's flaws are really blatantly evident in this current issue.

Featured subject this time is John Carter of Mars. A five-page article, timed to the re-issue of the Burroughs "Mars" books, rehashes the plots of the books in uninspired fashion. The new paperback covers are displayed, along with a map of ERB's Mars in the centerspread supplied by Ballantine Books. A short piece on Burroughs' pulp publishing history follows.

The comic news columns are the usual scoop on things; artist changes, upcoming story lines, new projects under discussion at Marvel and DC, plenty of covers. The other "Media Scene" columns cover upcoming movies, TV shows and books (crime, westerns and "mainstream"). There's the inevitable editorial (spotlighting a contention even better than Roy Thomas) and Supergraphics house ads. The package is professionally put together, but nothing startling.

What's wrong with all this? It's simply that all the "news" is of the party-line press release variety. The information from Marvel and DC is self-serving house copy, better than Roy Thomas) and Supergraphics house ads. The package is professionally put together, but nothing startling.

What's wrong with all this? It's simply that all the "news" is of the party-line press release variety. The information from Marvel and DC is self-serving house copy, better than all the comics are great, all the artists are stars, business is booming, everything is bright and sunny in this best of all possible worlds. There isn't the slightest bit of bite that suggests honest criticism or **investigative reporting**. One wonders whether anyone at **COMIXSCENE** actually reads the stuff they're printing. Would it be refreshing to read something like, "**KAZAR #1** is out with ludicrous story by Friedrich and pencil art by Reinman and Royer." Instead of the usual no-opinion statement of dry fact? The situation is no better with the non-comics news; the text seems lifted directly from publishers' promotional handouts. Even obvious dreck like the fifteenth imitation of the "Executioner" series is greeted with the gravity of the Second Coming.

When Steranko was working in comics he had a reputation for independence and integrity; there is none of that in evidence here. He has become a docile Ron Ziegler-ish mouthpiece for the publishers' public relations departments, and it's a damn shame.

If you want to keep abreast of upcoming comics and the like, I suppose this zine is nice to have; the information is there alright. But I think fans expected more from Jim Steranko. A **lot** more. **—A.S.**

FUNNYWORLD #15; $1.25 ($5 for four issues); Michael Barrier, editor; color covers; order from: Mike Barrier / Box 5229, Brady Station / Little Rock, Ark. 72205; animation/cartoon/comic fanzine

FUNNYWORLD, belying its name, isn't funny. According to editor Barrier, "**FUNNYWORLD** is intended for adult readers and is not a children's magazine." He's absolutely right.

FUNNYWORLD is dedicated to an academic assessment of the world of cartoons and comics. The writing is always first rate, but directed towards the cognoscente and not the curious. The articles are serious critiques of current and historic happenings in the animated film and funny animal comic book fields. A certain amount of background in these areas is assumed by the writers, so the novice is often left shaking his head in bewilderment when attempting to casually read portions of the magazine.

But, if you're interested or involved in these subjects, **FUNNYWORLD** is a must. The current issue contains a wealth of information ranging from its always controversial letters column (ranging from criticism of animation on Disney's **THE ARISTOCATS** to arguing the merits of underground comix) to part nine of "The Carl Barks Bibliography."

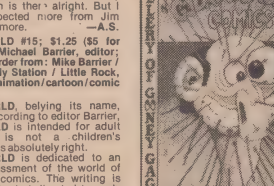
In between are features like: "Katz's Catastrophe," a very non-conformist comic strip; John Canemaker, a professor at the University of Connecticut; two articles on Tex Avery, a director and producer of animated cartoons in 1930's and 1940's; a report on the underground comix convention in Berkeley last year; part two of a study on the filming of the first X-rated cartoon, **FRITZ THE CAT** (this portion being devoted to the actual animation and filming, a critique of the film, and a letter from Robert Crumb); and the new animated X-rated film by Ralph Bakshi, **HEAVY TRAFFIC**, is given a quick run-down by editor Barrier.

The magazine is lavishly illustrated with everything from photographs of the people being discussed, to cels from the cartoons, to sketches and drawings of both characters and people. The front cover is by Dave Stevens and the back cover is a preview of two characters from Ralph Bakshi's proposed third cartoon feature, **COONSKIN.**

Let me say again that **FUNNYWORLD** is not much of a book for casual browsers and disinterested perusers. The illustrations are meant to compliment the text, not stand on their own, and the text is meant to appeal to the professional cartoonist and the dedicated students and fans of the industry. In this respect, **FUNNYWORLD** is an overwhelming success. **—J.V.**

FVP #6; 50¢; 32 pages; Chuck Fiala, editor; order from: Chuck Fiala / 6250 W. 84th Street / Burbank, Ill. 60459; semi-underground strip fanzine.

This is an enjoyable, unpretentious collection of amateur strips with a generally underground-ish feel. Tom Wimbish and Dave Licht, together and solo, turn in several nicely rendered short fantasies in a Wrightson cum Irons style. Charles Dixon does a nice cartooning job with the comical adventures of Archer Ball clinker is an overblown rock-influenced fantasy by Gary John Reynolds. I thought Peter Max psychedelica was passe by now. This zine is nothing to write home about, but I like it. It has a personality. **—A.S.**



GJDRKZLXCBWQ COMICS; 50¢ (plus 15¢ postage); 32 pages; 5¼" by 7¼"; Glenn Bray, editor; color covers; order from: Glenn Bray / P.O. Box 4482 / Slymar, Ca. 91342; Basil Wolverton fanzine.

Basil Wolverton's cartoons comprise the entirety of this little book. His good

natured insanities and absurdities abound and any lover of craziness has got to love this book. Admittedly, you have to love Wolverton's own brand of the crazies first.

A past contributor to **MAD** magazine and creator of such strips as Powerhouse Pepper and Spacehawk, Basil is in his element in **GJDRKZJKCBWQ.** It's devoted 100 per cent to the most absurd and impossible caricatures of improbable people and things. He's grotesque, but hilarious. Try a copy and see if it fits your head.

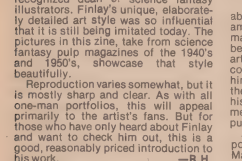
—J.V.

THE BEST OF VIRGIL FINLAY; $2.00; 32 pages; G.B. Love, editor; order from: The SFCA / 9875 SW 212 St. / Miami, Fla. 33157; art portfolio.

In this portfolio editor Love reprints 44 illustrations by the late Virgil Finlay, recognized dean of science fantasy illustrators. Finlay's unique, elaborately detailed art style was so influential that it is still being imitated today. The pictures in this zine, take from science fantasy pulp magazines of the 1940's and 1950's, showcase that style beautifully.

Reproduction varies somewhat, but it is mostly sharp and clear. As with all one-man portfolios, this will appeal primarily to the artist's fans. But for those who have only heard about Finlay and want to check him out, this is a good, reasonably priced introduction to his work.

—R.H.



THE BURROUGHS BULLETIN #25 (J. ALLEN ST. JOHN PORTFOLIO); $5 (including a year's membership in the ERB society) or $3.50 from several fanzine dealers; 28 pages; Vern Corriel, editor; quarterly / color cover; order a membership from: The Burroughs Bibliophiles / 6657 Locust / Kansas City, Mo. 64131; ERB fanzine.

The Burroughs Bibliophiles is a venerable society devoted to the work of Edgar Rice Burroughs; the **BULLETIN** is its magazine. This issue is devoted entirely to J. Allen St. John, an illustrator whose art adorned many of Burroughs' books and stories.

Leading off the issue is an article about the artist, reprinted from an 1898 magazine. The remainder of the book is a portfolio of dust jackets and pulp illustrations by St. John rendered ERB's characters. At the end, the editor offers useful commentary regarding original appearances and picture captions. Sadly, the reproduction doesn't always do St. John justice. His style, in keeping with its 19th century origins, was wispy and delicate. In most of these pictures that delicacy is lost. The pictures are either muddy or too dark.

The line illustrations do come off well and there is no faulting the handsome full-color cover.

With these reservations, and because one must join the Bibliophiles to receive the **BULLETIN**, casual lookers may not consider this issue worth the effort. It depends on the individual's interest in ERB in general and St. John in particular.

—R.H.

THE BURROUGHS BULLETIN #30; free to members; 20 pages; Vern Corriel, editor; quarterly; inquire through Vern Corriel / 6657 Locust / Kansas City, Mo. 64131; ERB fanzine.

To get this bulletin you have to be a member of the Burroughs Bibliophiles whose fee is $5.00 annually. I don't know what other amenities your membership affords you since the club bills this as the "original and only authorized Edgar Rice Burroughs fanzine." I suppose it has something going for it.

One of the latest bits of big news about Burroughs' creations are the comic adaptations begun by DC comics two years ago. This is reported in-depth by John Pocsik in an article comparing what ERB did, how DC interpreted this and what the results were for all concerned.

Corriel follows this with thoughts about H. Rider Haggard (author of **SHE**, among many others) and where ERB may have found inspiration for the ideas behind some of his tales. The final article is an old stand-by among ERB collectors; on one hand they consider him a unique and original writer and then they find many hypothetical sources for his "sources of inspiration." But forgive me for making my bemusement public—the article is very well written.

A look at **LULANA**, an Amazon movie poster art by Frazetta and Russ Manning is next. Luana is a female Tarzan who not only has a pet panther, but has five boy strips about her reprinted in this zine.

Before going into some closing comments by Vern, there is a page of photos showing a half-dozen jungle heroines of the silver screen like Nyoka, Luana and some Janes from Tarzan movies.

For people interested in the work of ERB this is an excellent zine where you can learn new things, meet new people and keep the spirit of Burroughs alive and kicking.

—B.N.

THE BUYER'S GUIDE #46; 50¢ ($3/for 24 issues); 48 pages total; 11" by 17", mailed without envelope; bi-weekly; Alan Light, editor; order from: DynaPubs / RR1, Box 297 / East Moline, Ill. 61244; ad fanzine.

The primary function of **TBG**, and therefore the primary feature is advertising. If you're in the market to buy or sell old comics, posters, fanzines, new comix, movie stills, plastic comic bags, old newspaper strips, original comic book pulp magazines, TV scripts, convention tickets, radio sound tracks or old magazines, you'll find both buyers and sellers here in abundance.

Ad rates, and anyone can advertise in **TBG**, are $1 for six five inch lines; $5 for a 5½" by 4¼" ad; $10 for 5½" by 8½"; $20 for an 8½" by 11" page; and $30 for an 11" by 17" full tabloid page. The newsprint doesn't always allow for the best reproduction, but it's generally adequate for this.

Since every advertiser assembles his own ad, there is precious little that can be done to achieve a pleasant overall layout to the zine. It may not be pretty, but it is practical.

Non-ad features include "Now What?," a rambling column of little or no import devoted to anything that pops into Murray Bishoff's head. "Beautiful Balloons" is a good column by Don and Maggie Thompson consisting primarily of news items and happenings in the comics-related field. There is also "Inside Comix" by Joe Brancatelli.

The other comments I can make about **TBG** are these: 1) circulation is 6,500; 2) publication is 24 issues per year, but these are occasionally erratically spaced and not always twice monthly as advertised; 3) many people, myself included, have experienced lapses in their subscriptions and it seems very difficult to insure a constant flow of issues after this occurs.

—J.V.

THE COLLECTOR #28; $1.25; 52 pages; Bill Wilson, editor; color covers and six interior pages of color; order from: Bill Wilson / 1535 Oneida Drive, Jefferson Borough / Clairton, Pa. 15025; general comics fanzine.

The main features of **THE COLLECTOR #28** are: a so-so "horror story in the EC tradition" called "Close Shave" by Alan Riefe, Don Rosa and Bill Wilson; a slightly insane feature on what comic book super-heroes might be doing if they were to be employed by real businesses, by William Reynolds and Bruce Patterson; part five of Alan Hanley's "Greenhorn" comic strip spoof; an article by Graham Sterling on Golden Age comic heroines; a portfolio of western drawings by Don Newton; "The Legacy Of Star Trek"—being a sort of history/tribute to that famed TV series by Scott Miller and Joe Fellabaum; and a study of the pulp, radio and comic book character, "The Shadow," by Murray Bishoff.

The articles are aimed at the average fan—not too heavy, yet interesting enough to keep you reading—and are all accompanied by tons of illustrations. Some are good, some are great and some are merely there. The use of color is very appealing and used to very good advantage throughout the issue. Artists include Ken Barr doing an EC tribute cover, John G. Fantucchio with several full-page and spot illustrations, Bill Black and Tony Greene with illustrations of super-femmes for the super-heroine article, Steve Fabian and John Byrne doing excellent spot illustrations and full-pagers respectively for the **STAR TREK** article, a Gil Kane Warlock drawing and a Don Newton back cover in color. Other artists are: Al Bradford, Ken Bruzenak, Bob Conway, John Ellis, Jim Lawson, Anthony Kowalik, Skip Olson, Bruce Patterson, Jim Pinkoski, Mike Roberts and Bob Smith. One nice thing about Bill Wilson is that he still maintains a policy of soliciting art from his readers and he's managed to showcase quite a few talented newcomers because of this.

Also included in the zine are an editorial and a letters page, and a very strange feature of questionable value called "The Golden Age Reviewer." This last feature is an actual "review column" for Golden Age comics by R. Frank Moreno, Jr. In its two pages, he covers exactly two comics. As he puts it, "I'll try to convey to you their good and bad points so that you'll get some idea of what you're buying when you shop around." But I'd venture to guess that anyone willing to spend $5 to $10 on either of the books is most probably already aware of both content and personal appeal. This seems to be a waste of space.

This magazine has something for everybody. It's a nice package of art, articles, strips, features and just plain good times. Mr. Wilson's experience shows through in this zine and he's learned a great deal from his previous 27 issues. **THE COLLECTOR** is an established fanzine that still maintains its basic aim of appealing to fans of all levels.

—J.V.

THE COMIC READER #101; 40¢ ($2/for six issues, $4/for 12 issues); 20 pages; 5½" by 8½", mailed without envelope; monthly; Jerry Sinkovec and Mike Tierbenbacher, editors; order from: Street Enterprises / P.O. Box 255 / Menomonee Falls, Wis. 53051; news fanzine.

This is the first issue of **TCR** with Jerry and Mike at the helm. Formerly, New Yorker Paul Levitz edited the megazine.

The objective of **TCR** is to keep fans abreast of the latest news concerning the pro comics, magazines of fan interest and fan projects. They do a pretty good job of covering DC because some of their news snoops work for that company. They are good, but not as thorough, with Marvel, Charlton, Warren and miscellany.

TCR is a good place to find out what comic is coming out on what day and maybe what the story is about, but I find it deathly lacking in any kind of investigative reporting. It seems to have no ideas or opinions, and it has been too dry up until now.

I'm hoping the new editorial team will remedy this situation. It certainly bears watching.

—B.N.

GRAPHIC GALLERY #2; $4; 64 pages; tri-annual; Russ Cochran, editor; order from: Russ Cochran / Route One / Adel, Iowa 50003; art display sales catalogue.

GRAPHIC GALLERY is a display of comic and fantasy original artwork, all of which is for sale. Most items have a straight price tag; but some are up for bid. However, the bidding deadline is now past so new readers can only put the strain on their wallets, or, if you're poor like me, look at the pretty pictures. And what pictures!

Here's just a sampling of what's inside: Carl Barks oil painting of Donald Duck; **KRAZY KAT** comic strips as well as **PRINCE VALIANT, TILLIE THE TOILER, BRINGING UP FATHER, L'IL ABNER, MANDRAKE, JUNGLE JIM** and numerous others; pulp and magazine pages or covers drawn by Virgil Finlay and Hannes Bok and others; there are pencil roughs of the **LITTLE ANNIE FANNY** strip that appears in **PLAYBOY**, as well as some **JONES TOUCH** and **PURPLE PICTOGRAPHY** strips from other men's mags by Jeff Jones and Berni Wrightson, respectively.

There are also Basil Wolverton caricatures of fandom and show-biz personalities, Frazetta line and color drawings, a **TUROK** comic cover painting and even pictures of a Jeff Jones statue for sale. Not to mention a wide variety of other originals dating from 1914 up until the present.

If you want to see a broad **tour de force** in comic and illustration style or a thumbnail sampling of graphic story greats who made things happen, and if you want to spend the money, **GRAPHIC GALLERY** is a worthy offering.

You may also want to sell or advertise in future issues (it comes out three times a year).

—B.N.

GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE #15; $1; 32 pages; Bill Spicer, editor; color covers; order from: Bill Spicer / 329 North Ave. 66 / Los Angeles, Ca. 90042; general interest fanzine.

This magazine has two features, both of them interviews. One is with cartoonist Gahan Wilson, the other with author/artist Harry Harrison.

And that's an understatement along the lines of: For Knox has two things, a big wad and some gold.

GSM has long been one of the top fanzines in existence, picking up several awards for excellence along the way. The interviews showcased in **GSM** are always completely professional both in appearance and depth. They allow you to know the man as though he were in the room talking to you and not just answering a lot of questions.

Dick Voll interviews Gahan Wilson, whom you've seen either in **PLAYBOY, NATIONAL LAMPOON, THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION**, or one of his own books of collected cartoons. He's the guy with the ticklish sense of the macabre, the free-hand horror and other nice beasties.

Harry Harrison used to be a comic artist but for the last two decades has been a science fiction writer. His book, **MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM!**, was adapted to the screen and renamed **SOYLENT GREEN.**

In Harrison's interview, Spicer and Pete Sernisi let Harry into conversations of his early days as a comic artist, his metamorphosis to science fiction writer and his associations with people from both fields.

Included with both interviews are cartoons or comic pages and photographs of the men. The Harrison piece has a montage of photos from **SOYLENT GREEN**. The front cover is by Wilson and the back is by Harrison and Wally Wood with color added by D. Bruce Berry.

As has been its history, **GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE** is still the best spent dollar in fandom.

—B.N.

INFINITY #5; $3.50; 44 pages and color poster; Adam Malin and Gary Berman, editors; color covers; order from: Gary Berman / 197-50F Peck Avenue / Flushing, N.Y. 11365; comic fanzine.

The latest issue of this little-of-this, little-of-that "pro-artzine" has undeniably high production values: typeset copy and quality printing on slick,

textured paper. The full-color covers are a science fiction scene-by Larry Todd, and a nostalgic imaginary pulp cover by Mike Kaluta. A color print of weirdo rock group by Bernie Wrightson is included with the zine.

The first feature is a portfolio of four watercolors (in black and white) by Esteban Maroto. The editors speak highly of these but they look like rather mediocre Maroto to me; the colors may be fantastic, but you can't see them here.

The article of primary interest is an interview with Richard Corben, conducted by Jan Strnad. It's a very worthwhile interview; Corben's a giant creative talent who knows what he's about and he has a lot to say about his career, overground and underground comics, fandom, and life in general. The interview is illustrated with some oddly-chosen pieces of art and some at-home photos of Corben and the nifty clay models he sculpts of his characters.

Underground artist Larry Todd contributes four "notebook pages" that are obviously too finished to be the real McCoy. It's good stuff, though. He also turns in a one page strip and some spot illustrations.

The editors contribute a report on the 1972 Creation Con. It's typical of this sort of thing, rather dull and overly concerned with name-dropping. There's a six page article by Doug Murray on **WARP**, the screwball space-opera stage production that flopped on Broadway. Neal Adams was the art director for the show, and several of his costume design model sheets are featured. Nice off-the-beaten-track art for Adams fans.

Other features: a fiction mood piece by Strnad, "Tarzan's Chicago Adventure," a two-page strip illustrated by Frank Brunner, a page of Vaughn Bode's **JUNKWAFFEL**, editors' notes, a letters section, and the typical assortment of spot illos by the people one usually finds in zines of this sort: Williamson, Morrow, Krenkel, Harper, etc.

The layout could be better; several of the spots are unsigned, and the contents page is of no help in identifying the artists. Somebody screwed up and switched a photo of Corben with an illustration on the letters page.

There's no question that editors Malin and Berman are working hard to produce a good zine and it has improved markedly from the early issues. But the **INFINITY** concept, a melange of articles and big name art in a slick package is no longer a novelty on the fanzine market.

Still, there's no doubt that Corben fans will want to have it for the interviews. **—A.S.**

PHANTASMAGORIA #3; $5; 40 pages; Kenneth Smith, editor; color covers; order from: Kenneth Smith / Box 20020A, L.S.U. Station / Baton Rouge, La. 70803. First issue.

There has never been a magazine quite like **PHANTASMAGORIA**. Nor has there been a magazine more difficult to review.

First, it must be understood that **PHANTASMAGORIA** is not a fanzine. The only thing **PHANTASMAGORIA** has in common with fanzines is its size and distribution. **PHANTASMAGORIA** is a one-man show, a personal expression by artist and philosopher Kenneth Smith. Exquisitely packaged with a full-color, wrap-around cover, high-quality coated stock, and countless tinted interior illustrations, this magazine is the closest thing to a work of art to appear in the fanzine market.

Except for an editorial and a dedicatory insert, the entire magazine is devoted to "A Fable from The Age of Fish," a fantasy allegory that explores the nature of life and death. The text, lettered in Smith's own calligraphic hand, and the sensitive illustrations are designed with such care that they blend inseparably into a single unit. Thought-ful and thought-provoking, moving and mind-expanding, this labor of love appeals to both the emotions and the intellect. One feels this book is what limited-edition publishing should be all about.

Sadly, the very qualities which make the book so remarkable are the qualities which will limit its appeal to a very small number of fans. In a long editorial (which, though almost agonizingly small, should not be passed over), Mr. Smith laments this fact, and the too-common tendency for people to avoid subjects either uncomfortable or unfamiliar. Realizing this, and realizing that this review alone will neither change many minds nor do the magazine justice, I strongly urge the reader to buy **PHANTASMAGORIA** and see for himself what I'm talking about. It is an experience not to be forgotten. **—R.H.**

ROCKET'S BLAST AND THE COMICOLLECTOR #104; $1 ($3.50/for four issues, $6/for eight issues, $8.50/for 12 issues, $11.75/for 18 issues); 104 pages; every six weeks; G.B. Love, editor; color covers; order from: The SFCA / 9875 S.W. 212 Street / Miami, Fla. 33157; ad magazine.

The **RB&CC** is one of the best known and certainly the oldest regularly published fanzine in history. Most of its space is allotted for ads but a great deal of non-ad material is also included in the last couple of years in order to keep abreast of some other adzines which have been threatening the **RB&CC**'s position as King-Hill.

First up is chapter two of a Wally Wood strip done for Avon Publications entitled "An Earthman on Venus." It's eight pages of decent Wood but, as they say in baseball, they didn't get the good Wood on it.

A small Miami Star Trek Convention is the subject of the report issued by Orlando Falcon entitled "Star Trek Lives"; and Falcon later joins Jim Van Hise and Mark Burbey in "Critique," the SFCA's fanzine and underground review column.

Then Van Hise steps out to do a solo effort, the ninth installment of a series of articles concerning the serial called "The Cliffhangers." In this issue, they focus on **SPY SMASHER** and do a very fine and thorough job, discussing everything from the plot, stars to stuntmen and chapter to chapter.

J.B. Clifford, Jr. contributes a good, tight article about "The Finest EC," which is **SHOCK ILLUSTRATED #3**, the last of their short-lived Picto-Fiction series. Clifford tells the whys and wherefores that brought the Picto-Fiction series about and how they managed to die so suddenly.

Van Hise returns with "Pulps" (a part-one-of-two look at the works of writer Otis Adelbert Kline), a review of the TV premier of **GENESIS II** and danged if he don't follow that right up (this time teamed with Larry Bigman) with another review, this time of this week's slowest checklist entitled "The Williamson Collector." This lists three Williamson illustrated stories from Atlas Comics and reprints a five-page story.

Sturdy mainstays of the **RB&CC** have been the columns of Howard Siegel and Ray Miller. In this issue, Siegel has news items, info, a word-search puzzle and his annual Year End Report on what's happened in the comic industry. There's a feature on "Comic Art History of England" as well as his fine "Fandom Profile" series, this time heralding the exceptional Stan Blair.

Ray Miller has the "Information Center" where fans of every strip write in with questions about their favorite heroes, books or creators. Included with the column is a **GHOST RIDER** Index by Don Rosa.

The other non-ad contributions are the cover and a column called "Keyhole" (by Hamilton Benedict), containing news bits about the comic scene. The cover, while not top-grade anyway, is brought close to ruin by the poor color registration job it had.

I've always recommended the **RB&CC** to anyone interested in fandom as one of the best gateways there is. It remains so. **—B.N.**

STYX #2; $2.50; 64 pages; Joe Krolik, editor; color covers; order from: Joe Krolik / 490 Cordova Street / Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R3N 1A7; general interest.

The contributions of **STYX** are highly diversified, numerous and generally brief with the exceptions of three articles: "Howard Collector," "Jack London and Max Brand," and "Lost Novels of the Pulp Era."

"The Howard Collector" by Glenn Lord is an interesting and articulate account of Howard's early attempts at becoming a published writer in the pulps and the herculean task, many years after his suicide, of locating and publishing neglected Howard manuscripts.

Glenn Lord is the authorized agent of Howard's literary estate, a recognized expert on Howard and his works. The fantasy and a man who did some of the greatest work in that genre.

Chester D. Cuthbert, in his article on Jack London and Max Brand, suggests they both provided a similar kind of esteem to the fields of fantasy and science fiction literature even though they had diametrically opposing styles—both in their lives and their works.

London was the hard apple; a tragedian and lover of the strong and seamy side of life. Brand was the romanticist and dreamer, wishing for what could be. Cuthbert's analysis is interesting and presented in a readable, no-nonsense manner which shuns the usual flackery of fawning over two people who are favorites of his. London and Brand are objectively displayed by way of contrasting their personalities against their prose and their fantasies against their facts. It's a laudably good effort on the part of Cuthbert.

In "Lost Novels of the Pulp Era," top-ranked collector, codifier and writer Robert Weinberg has presented a good case for the reissuing of long-buried books. Bob's argument is that there were a good many works from the days of **WEIRD TALES, STIRLING, AMAZING, FANTASTIC ADVENTURES** and other pulps that deserve reprinting for the modern audience that craves the best of fantastic writing.

Other contents of **STYX** include a science fiction strip where the artist gets carried away with stylistic self-indulgence; many amateur short stories the authors brought to conclusion before fleshing out either characters or plot; an art portfolio of whimsical fantasy by Steve Riley; a humorous short story by Daniel Shapiro; a centerspread of Captain Marvel and old Shazam; a "Tribute to EC" which unwisely limits itself via reproduction of 36 EC covers.

The back cover is a pastel drawing reproduced in full color by Clyde Cauldwell which shows a very fine use of the medium, but calls for Clyde to beware of extravagance: this is nice but very busy.

Front cover is by the much-praised Jeff Jones and one look at it tells you why. It's a painting of the enchanting Scfreherazade, or an enchanting painting of Scheherazade. Both are correct.

STYX is big and it's meaty, and while it leans towards fantasy themes, it shouldn't disappoint anyone who buys it just for art or good reading. **—B.N.**

THE SENSUOUS FRAZETTA; $2.00 (add 50¢ if you desire first class); 28 pages; order from Andrew Warner / 2250 S.W. 28th St. / Miami, Fla. 33133; art portfolio.

When you talk about Frank Frazetta, you're talking about a very special artist. His work is at once bold, sensitive, imaginative and technically excellent. There's no one else like him, and that his reason, he is the most collected and respected artist of all fan favorites.

THE SENSUOUS FRAZETTA is a showcase of some of the work he did after leaving Al Capp's art stable in the mid-sixties. Specifically, Frazetta felt that his previous nine years of cartooning may have eliminated his ability to render lifelike illustration. As he put it, "I was afraid I'd lost my hand."

In order to practice straight illustration and get paid for it at the same time, he accepted commissions illustrating some deservedly obscure adult paperback novels of the day. Stories like "Sin Bad By Cruise" and "The Dangerous Age," themselves tasteless hack jobs, were nevertheless graced with some unique and different illustrations. The books have been quietly laid to rest, but the drawings of Frank Frazetta have reappeared.

As a matter of fact, **THE SENSUOUS FRAZETTA** is nothing more than a reprint edition of a portfolio published by Captain George Henderson a few years back called "The Frazetta You Didn't Know About." The conferences being Henderson's version was on cheaper newsprint, had several more pages and cost 50¢.

The contents are seven double-page illustrations and fourteen single pagers. It comes unstapled so you can look at the large pages.

The theme of each illustration is the study of a lusty, provocative woman. Frazetta seemed to be toying a lot with folds, drapes and wrinkles when he did these. Often we'll see a beautiful girl holding a towel to her voluptuous bulid or stretched come-hitherly under an askew sheet. Illustrations are taking the stress factors of form fitted dresses or challenging the tensile strength of bikini and bra hooks. Hourglass bodies stand proud inside a wispy chemise or peignoir. Long, shapely legs stretch everywhere and there's enough cleavage to get lost in. The medium employed is wash and ink and, as always, the compositions and executions are flawless.

If you don't know who Frank Frazetta is, this is a good place to meet him.

If you're already familiar with his work, the $2 tariff on **THE SENSUOUS FRAZETTA** is a better bet than what some dealers have been charging for out-of-print issues of the Henderson edition. **—B.N.**

THE WHO'S WHO OF AMERICAN COMIC BOOKS, vol. 1; $6; 64 pages; Jerry Bails and Hames Ware, editors; order from: Jerry Bails / 487 Lakewood Dr. / Detroit, Mich. 48215; comics reference work.

This is volume one of what is certainly the most ambitious project ever likely to be undertaken by comics enthusiasts. The **WHO'S WHO** aim is to present essential biographical and bibliographical data on every artist, writer and editor who ever contributed original material to the four-color comics. This initial volume (of a projected four) covers "A" through "F"; from Kim Aamodt, prolific post-war scripter, to Paul Fung, Sr., early 1940's humor artist. The more detailed entries give career history, influences and work in related fields for the subject. It then lists his work (with dates) for the various comics publishers by character and type of title. Many artists and writers have supplied the information themselves. Panels of art from originals nicely supplement the text.

Since full credits on comic stories are only a recent development, most of the information has been provided by hundreds of contributing fans who have compiled checklists from their own collections and have poured over thousands of books, identifying unsigned art and looking for "sneaked" signatures. Because this is the first serious attempt to collect the facts on

who did what, when, and for whom, there is much missing information and doubtless many errors. But now that scholarly collectors have this invaluable starting point in hand, much more data can be compiled and the entries updated for later editions.

If you read comics only for the brief enjoyment of the story itself, you'll no doubt find this book a dull waste of time; but if you've ever tried to index your collection, or read an artist checklist with interest, or looked at a story and wondered "Now who the hell drew that?," you simply must have this book. It is a living, breathing tribute to the men and women who worked on the comics. And to the fans who care about them (when the publishers usually don't give a damn.) —A.S.

VENTURE #2; 75¢; 32 pages; Frank Cirocco and Garry Winnick, editors; order from: Venture Magazine / 5567 Dwight Ave. / San Jose, Ca. 95118; strip zine.

Cirocco and Winnick have put together a rather nice zine here for folks who like the fannish flavor or fanzines.

The contents are four strips and several one page strips with fantasy adventure themes as well as covers and interior illustrations of the same ilk. The work isn't polished or professional but shows promise. The first thing the artists must learn is to lay back on the use of zipatone. They use it here with appaling frequency, often obscuring the artwork underneath.

The stories are average, the writing competent, and the entire package holds together well. It's worth a look if you have the change to spare and it serves as a good example of just what we mean by a fanzine. —B.N.

WITZEND #9; $5; 38 pages; Bill Pearson, editor; order from: Wonderful Publishing Co. / Box 177 / Coney Island Station / Brooklyn, N.Y. 11224.

The subject is the great W.C. Fields and the focus is on the man and how he relates to some of his greatest motion pictures.

In "The Films of Charles Bogle," editor Bill Pearson gives a keen discussion-cum-analysis of how Fields wore the starring roles of THE **OLD FASHIONED WAY, MY LITTLE CHICKADEE, MAN ON THE FLYING TRAPEZE, IT'S A GIFT** and **YOU CAN'T CHEAT AN HONEST MAN** as naturally and comfortably as an old sweater.

Another Fields classic, **THE BANK DICK**, is shown in a series of thirty stills with captioned capsulizations of the story. **NEVER GIVE A SUCKER AN EVEN BREAK** is the subject of a two-page photo spread and commentary.

Placed in the middle of the magazine for easy removal is a game called "The W.C. Fields Game of Adversity" which calls for a lot of cheating, double-dealing and larceny to win. Even though it's almost impossible to win anyway. It comes complete game board, money, Adversity cards and rules.

It's up to you to steal the dice and tokens.

Following that are a pack of pictures entitled "Between the Scenes," showing Fields posing for publicity shots or just relaxing at his Hollywood villa. Fields also played "A Passy Old Man in the Movies" and that's the title of the next batch of stills showing W.C. as he appeared in a slew of films ranging from **IT'S THE OLD ARMY WAY** (1926) to **MISSISSIPPI** (1935).

Lastly is a recollection by Allan Wood, a vaudeville and film sidekick of Fields. This is a strong short article and gives a rare glimpse of Fields as seen from the eyes of someone very close to him.

There's also a Fields filmography and overall the book has some 134 photos—which also show Fields teamed with such noteworthies as Mae West, Gracie Allen, Chester Conklin and Bing Crosby. The cover is a Jeff Jones painting reproduced in duo-tone and there are several good illustrations of Fields by Bill Pearson throughout.

As Fields might say, "Anyone foolish enough to spend the money for this thing should be foolish enough to like it." —B.N.

WONDERWORLD #9 (formerly GRAPHIC STORY WORLD #3); 75¢ ($3/for four issues); 40 pages; quarterly; Richard Kyle, editor; order from: Richard Kyle / 2450 Cedar Avenue / Long Beach, Ca. 90806; general interest fanzine.

In mid-1971, editor Richard Kyle started a bi-monthly newszine called **GRAPHIC STORY WORLD**. Now, several expansions and a name-change later, **GSW** has become **WONDERWORLD**, a slick, professionally produced magazine devoted to comics as an artform. Kyle's goal is to see comics start given the respect enjoyed by novels and the cinema. The very term "graphic story" is part of his image-upgrading campaign. In this premiere issue of **WW**, Kyle presents articles, essays, and letters covering everything from commercial and underground comics and fanzines and European comic art.

This issue's lead feature is the first English-language appearance of a popular Belgian adventure strip, **BERNARD PRINCE**. The eight page short, "The Victims," is a fine introduction to European comics. Solidly written by Michael Greg and drawn in dynamic style of Hermann Huppen, the strip says much about the differences in content and presentation of comics on opposite sides of the Atlantic.

Other features are an appreciation of the much-**under**appreciated Dell comics of the 1950's by Russ Manning; a short blurb on a thankfully-unsold ERB daily strip by Roy Thomas and Andru Esposito; the second chapter of **PENN AND CHRIS**, Dan Spiegle's strip about the adventures of two cabin boys; a look at Richard Corben by Clay Geerdes; and coverage of the huge Lucca, Italy comic convention. Departments include book reviews, letters, opinions and a somewhat pompous introductory editorial.

If any general criticism were to be made of **WONDERWORLD**, it would be a matter of biases. The editors clearly believe in the superiority of the European graphic stories. That bias is reflected in the rather short shrift given the U.S. product. Agreed, the American comic scene is less diversified and more familiar; nonetheless **WW** would be an ideal place to showcase the lesser-known geniuses of American comics as well as presenting a case for the diversification of the domestic product to a point where it **can** match its Old World counterpart.

One other drawback is Kyle's disappointing **promises-to-deliveries** ratio. Since the first issue of the old **GSW**, expansion has been considered more desirable than scheduling. The announced frequency—quarterly—has been little more than fantasy. The single flaw in Mr. Kyle's professional approach might be solved if he would concentrate now upon fulfilling his schedule rather than insisting on further expansion.

WONDERWORLD is definitely aimed at the intellectual fan. Despite its solid content and good presentation, the fanzine may not appeal to the more "fannish," less serious members of fandom. But for those who want to dig into the medium more deeply, **WW** is a must. —R.H.

NEWSPAPER STRIP FANZINES

CRITTER #3; 60¢; 12 pages; order from: Hanthercraft Publications / P.O. Box 709 / Corinth, Miss. 38834; newspaper strip reprints and one original strip.

I confess I'm confused as to the purpose of this magazine. It opens on the inside front cover with a 1938 reprint of **MANDRAKE THE MAGICIAN** that carries on for six pages, sneaks in three pages of its own strip called **TANDRA**, then heads for the back cover with seven pages of **RIP KIRBY** reprints.

The **TANDRA** sequence was strong enough to stand alone—indeed, should have taken more space to develop itself—and the rest is a rather gratuitous reprinting of old pages with no indication anywhere of whether they will continue.

I'm assuming two things: 1) **TANDRA**, drawn by someone named Hanther, will continue in subsequent issues, and 2) there will be subsequent issues.

But guesswork isn't enough. If the editor of **CRITTER** wants to inspire a secure readership, he'd do well to come out from under the covers and speak to us once in a while. —B.N.

FAMOUS FUNNIES and VINTAGE FUNNIES; 50¢ each ($17/for 52 issues); 52 pages each; 16 pages total, respectively 11" by 17", mailed without envelope; each weekly; Alan Light, editor; order from: DynaPubs / RR1, Box 297 / Oregon, Ill. 61224; newspaper strip reprint paper.

FAVORITE FUNNIES and **VINTAGE FUNNIES** are reviewed together because both are Alan Light's weekly tabloids reprinting newspaper comic strips from the period 1912 to 1945. **FAVORITE**, the younger of the two, contains: **BRICK BRADFORD** (1935 Sundays); **THE PHANTOM** (1940 Sundays); **ALLEY OOP** (1941 dailys); **SKY ROADS** (1930 dailys, drawn by Dick Caulkins); **LITTLE NEMO** (1913 Sundays); **SPEED SPAULDING** (a 1930's daily strip apparently from **MR. WORLDS COLLIDE**); **BRINGING UP FATHER** (1919 Sundays); **KRAZY KAT** (1921 dailys); **BATMAN** (1944 dailys); and **CHARLIE CHAN** (1930's Sundays).

VINTAGE features: **SUPERMAN** (1940 Sundays); **DON DIXON AND THE HIDDEN EMPIRE** (two Sundays from different sequences); **MANDRAKE THE MAGICIAN** (1935 Sundays); **KATZENJAMMER KIDS** (no Sundays); **THEIR ONLY CHILD** (1913 Sundays by George McManus); **TERRY AND THE PIRATES** (1938 dailys and Sundays); **DICK TRACY** (1937 dailys and Sundays); **BATMAN** (1944 Sundays); **TAILSPIN TOMMY** (1920's Sundays); **KRAZY KAT** (Sundays); and **TIM TYLER'S LUCK** (1933 sequence ghosted by Alex Raymond).

The appeal of the papers will depend upon the reader's preferences in old strips. Some are funky, like **BUCK ROGERS** and **SKY ROADS**; some are well-written, like **DICK TRACY**; some are pretty to look at, like **TAILSPIN TOMMY** with Hal Forrest's dated but elegant penwork. The reprinting of a couple, like the subtly humorous **KRAZY KAT** and **TERRY AND THE PIRATES**—are truly superlative strip of all time—is a downright public service.

However, both papers share the same drawbacks. For one thing, reproduction quality, especially on Sunday pages, is low, even on the **TERRY** Sundays) criminally so. There's no denying the problems involved in shooting from 40 year old comic pages, but for the money, editor Light should do much better.

Then, too, unless interested in more than just a couple of the strips included, the prospective buyer might consider the subscription price rather high for the small number of pages. Check out a single copy first to see how you like it.

THE MENOMONEE FALLS GAZETTE #100; 75¢ (U.S. only: $8/for 12 issues, $16/for 26 issues, $29/for 52 issues); 48 pages total; 11" by 17", mailed without envelope; weekly; Jerome Sinkovec, editor; order from: Street Enterprises / P.O. Box 255 / Menomonee Falls, Wis. 53051; newspaper strip reprint paper.

This is the gala 100th issue of one of the damn finest fanzines ever. A simple, wonderful idea: get together the various adventure strips running haphazardly in papers throughout the country and put them all together in a handy tabloid format; week after week of dailies per page (plus some Sundays), so that strip fans throughout the country can follow their favorites at their leisure (eliminating the costly and messy operation of subscribing to out-of-town papers and clipping the strips). In the two years the **GAZETTE** has been around, the Menomonee Falls crew have overcome numerous hassles with the syndicates, stuck to their tough once-a-week schedule, and have expanded and upgraded the zine at every opportunity. It started with a thin 16 pages on yellow-prone 32 lb. newsprint; now we have two fat sections on 50 lb. offset paper. As an added extra for this special occasion, eight pages of excellently done color brighten up the issue. News, columns, and ads fill the margin spaces.

The strips can be filed in three categories: current American adventure strips, reprints of earlier American strips of note and foreign adventure strips, mostly English. A rundown of the contents:

Current strips (six dailys except where noted): **PRINCE VALIANT** (Sunday only); **JOHNNY HAZARD** (and Sunday); **RIP KIRBY**; **SECRET AGENT CORRIGAN**; **CAPTAIN EASY**; **JEFF COBB**; **RICK O'SHAY**; **STEVE CANYON** (and Sunday); **FRIDAY FOSTER** (and Sunday); **AMBLER** (and Sunday); **JULIET JONES**; **BUZ SAWYER**; **THE PHANTOM**; **ON STAGE** (and Sunday); **DATELINE: DANGER**; **TARZAN** (Sunday only); **FLASH GORDON**; **KERRY DRAKE**; **BRICK BRADFORD**; **BIG BEN BOLT**; **DICK TRACY**; **MANDRAKE**; and **DR. KILDARE**. Space prohibits, but this list includes some of the real comic art heavies: Williamson, Caniff, Gould, Wildey, Robbins, etc.

Reprint strips: **BATMAN** (1943); **DR. GUY BENNETT** (nice Frank Thorne from 1968); **SUPERMAN** (1942); **RED BARRY** (Will Gould's **fantastic** detective strip, 1935); **THE SPIRIT** (Eisner's early strip, 1942); **PETER SCRATCH** (Lou Fine detective strip, 1965); **BEN CASEY** (Neal Adams, 1963); **RED RYDER** (1951); **TARZAN** (Dan Barry, 1948); and **BUCK ROGERS** (Murphy Anderson, 1958).

Import strips (most from England): **TUG TRANSOM** (sea adventure, 1958); **MODESTY BLAISE** (sexy secret agent with outstanding Jim Holdaway art from 1967, England); **PAUL TEMPLE** (upper-crust detective, 1965); **AIR HAWK** (beautifully drawn Australian adventure, with Sundays); **GUNNER** (soccer action from Argentina, Jose Luis Salinas art); **THE SEEKERS** (action-adventure, 1965); **JEFF HAWKE** (science fiction, 1969); **JAMES BOND** (1967); **FLAMEN** (fantasy adventure, nice art, 1970); and **SCARTH A.D. 2195** (nudie science fiction, 1970).

Whew! That's a whopping lot of comics for every week. Naturally, it's not likely that you'll love every strip in this melange, but you're sure to find some of them impossible to do without once you get into them. The arrival of the **GAZETTE** in the mail will become a weekly event, as it is in this domicile. Helluva zine, helluva value. May there be hundreds more! —A.S.

THE MENOMONEE FALLS GUARDIAN #21; 35¢ (U.S. only: $4.50/for 12 issues, $9/for 26 issues, $17/for 52 issues); 11" by 17", mailed without envelope; weekly; Jerome Sinkovec, editor; order from: Street Enterprises / P.O. Box 255 / Menomonee Falls, Wis. 53051; newspaper strip reprint paper.

The **GUARDIAN** is the sister publication of **THE MENOMONEE FALLS**

GAZETTE. Where the **GAZETTE** is devoted to adventure strips, the **GUARDIAN** dotes on the humorous ones. Included in its lineup of currently running funny business are one week's worth (six strips) each of the following: **CONCHY** by James Childress; **TUMBLEWEEDS** by Tom Ryan, **BROOM HILDA** by Russell Myers; **POGO** by Walt Kelly; **SALLY BANANAS** by Charles Barsotti; **B.C.** by Johnny Hart; **BEETLE BAILEY** by Mort Walker; **JOE PALOOKA** by Tony DiPreta; and **MICKEY FINN** by Morris Weiss. You also get the Sunday strips—in black and white—of **POGO** and **BROOM HILDA.**

In addition to these modern favorites, we're also treated to some classic goodies from the past. The **GUARDIAN** runs sequential continuities of: **THIMBLE THEATRE STARRING POPEYE** by Elzie Segar (from 1933); Herriman's **KRAZY KAT** (from 1934); **ALLEY OOP** by V.T. Hamlin (from 1949); **CAPTAIN EASY** (from 1951) by Leslie Turner; and **ROMEO BROWN**, an English strip from 1960 by O'Donnell and Holdaway.

The format is that of an actual newspaper, though just slightly smaller in size. The strips cover about 4/5 of each page and remainder is devoted to still more strips like **THE BORN LOSER, WINTHROP, FUNNY BUSINESS, EEK & MEEK** and **BUGS BUNNY**. There is also a half-page cartoon by Mike Tiefenbacher called **JORNIE BIGNOSE.**

As with the **GAZETTE**, the **GUARDIAN** maintains its weekly schedule consistently. Reproduction is excellent, even on the older strips. I consider this magazine to be one of the highlights of my weekly mail and recommend it unhesitatingly to all lovers of the truly funny "funny pages."

But I still can't understand what **JOE PALOOKA, MICKEY FINN** and **CAPT. EASY** are doing here—they haven't elicited a chuckle yet. **—J.V.**

REPRINT FANZINES

AIR FIGHTERS COMICS #2; $2.00; 60 pages; 7½" by 10¼"; color front cover; order from Nostalgia, Inc. / P.O. Box 34305 / Dallas, Texas 75234; comic book reprint fanzine.

This is merely a black and white reprint of the second issue of **AIR FIGHTERS** (1942). It's primary value is that it is an inexpensive (compared to the selling price of the original comic) way for fans to get a good sample of a Golden Age comic. The origin stories of Airboy, Skywolf, The Iron Age, Black Angel, the Flying Dutchman, and The Bald Eagle are all here. It's a potpourri of World War II Aces, screaming Hitlers and buck-tooth "Japs"; an excellent reflection of the mood of the times.

Reproduction: cover color is poor, murky and off registered. Interior reproduction is not much better. It's all half-toned from the actual four-color comic and a lot of detail is lost due to the screening. Still, it is readable and considerably cheaper than the original which is selling in the neighborhood of $100. **—J.V.**

E.C. CLASSIC REPRINT #3 (SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES #12);

E.C. CLASSIC REPRINT #4 (THE HAUNT OF FEAR #12);

All are $1 each ($5/for six issues, $12/for 16 issues); 36 pages; standard comic book size; color cover and interior; Ron Barlow and Bruce Hershenson, editors; order from: East Coast Comix / P.O. Box 1290 / Great Neck, N.Y. 11023; reprints of EC comics.

E.C. CLASSIC REPRINT #3—The only good excuse for reprinting this EC "classic" is to give the dopers in the audience a few chuckles over "The Monkey." Fairly drawn by Joe Orlando, the strip details the downfall of a young man who goes from marijuana to heroin in one easy lesson and kills his old man for fix money. Though daring in the 1950's, it is like all the EC social consciousness stories: so frantic and overdone that it becomes self-parody. Now it's no more than camp. So much for the reason that this book was reprinted. The other three stories are: "Deadline" with typical mediocre Jack Kamen art: "The Kidnapper" with fair Reed Crandall art; and "Fall Guy" with good early Wood illustrations. These are even worse stories than "Monkey," representing all that was bad about the EC house style. All, especially "Fall Guy," are the most ridiculously contrived "snap ending" tales ever written.

Sure, it's EC. Sure, the original goes for $14 and this is only a buck. But here's hoping that with all the class material EC had to offer, the next reprint will be more wisely chosen. **—R.H.**

E.C. CLASSIC REPRINT #4—What can I say, except that this is another of the color reprints of EC comics being done by East Coast Comix. The reproduction is direct from the actual comics secreted away in the vault of Bill Gaines, and though a trifle clogged in places due to the pulpy comic book paper, it's nothing short of fantastic. The new coloring is even done by Marie Severin—the colorist for the original ECs. In other words, this is a faithful and exact copy of the back of an EC comic which would cost you about $20 on today's market.

The contents? Well, the cover's by "Ghastly" Graham Ingels; by Johnny Craig: "Till Death Do Us Part" by Joe Orlando; and "What's Cookin'?" by Jack Davis. Not exactly representative of EC's best stories or art, but a fair sampling of the standard fare.

So take a trip back to the fear-filled fifties for a fraction of the fee, and join the EC crew for frightmares galore.

—J.V.

E.C. PORTFOLIO #3 and E.C. PORTFOLIO #4; $15 each; 52 pages each, 11" by 17", mailed in cardboard mailer; Russ Cochran, editor; color cover and interior pages; order from: Russ Cochran / Route One / Adel, Iowa 50003; reprints of E.C. stories in art portfolios.

These two handsome volumes of the latest in Russ Cochran's series of EC reprints. His philosophy is to treat the EC stories as legitimate works of art and to give them the "class" format they deserve. The art is reduced from the originals and printed on heavy bristol stock, the same size as the original art. Each of these books has four EC covers, newly colored by Marie Severin. The prime goodies within are listed below.

PORTFOLIO #3: "With All The Trappings" (typically grisly Graham Ingels); "50 Girls 50" (gorgeous Al Williamson science fiction); "Mars is Heaven" (Wally Wood art on a famous Ray Bradbury story); "Foul Play" (WWII air action, John Severin); "Spawn of Venus" (blob invader, Al Feldstein). Covers by Williamson and Frazetta, Ingels, Feldstein and Jack Davis.

PORTFOLIO #4: "A Little Stranger" (werewolf-vampire hijinks, Ingels); "By George!" (a Williamson Classic); "Man and Superman" (funny Harvey Kurtzman tongue-in-cheek sf); "Bellyfull" (fine line work by Bernie Krigstein); "Chatterbox" (buried alive stuff, Ingels). Covers by Wood, Ingels and Feldstein.

The cunsensus among comic fans is that the Entenmann reprint line represented the most remarkable wedding of extraordinary artwork with enjoyable horror, science fiction and war stories ever to hit the comic press. Now $15 is hardly a piddling sum to pay for a fanzine; so if you are unfamiliar with EC, or just like to read the stories, you would be better off picking up the bargain East Coast Comix $1 reprints. Art freaks, hardcore EC nuts, and zine collectors with an eye for quality, however, will gladly shell out the price; the super-quality format justified it. These books are definitely worth it. Keep 'em coming! **—A.S.**

FLASHBACK #1 (Daredevil Battles Hitler); $3 ($10/for four issues); 64 pages; Alan Light, editor; color cover; order from: DynaPubs / RR #1 Box #297 / E. Moline, Ill. 61244; comic book reprint fanzine.

This is the first in a projected series of cover-to-cover reprints of rare "Golden Age" comics, in a laudable effort to make these books generally available at a reasonable price (Overstreet lists this one at $150, mint). The Daredevil in question, you latecomers, is not Marvel's current hero, but a two-tone costumed, boomerang-throwing crimefighter from the 1940's.

In this first issue of his own, he is teamed with the other Lev Gleason heroes and villains of the era—Silver Streak, Nyoka, Jungle Hale, Dickie Dean, Cloud Crutis, and Pirate Prince—to fight ol' Schickelgruber in six different adventures. Hitler is "profiled" in a seventh feature, "The Man of Hate."

I guess this book is more or less typical of prime Golden Age product; rock 'em, sock 'em action, no plot, ludicrous wisecrack dialogue. The art is not bad for the period, but quite crude by modern standards. The "Get them Japanazi rats" message (pre-Pearl Harbor, by the way) that permeates every page is historically interesting, fun for nostalgia freaks, but nevertheless rather embarrassing.

Reproduction is a problem when shooting the art directly from a copy of the comic book. The color areas muddy up the line work, and many caption blocks here are unreadably dark. Alan Light and his printer ought to get together and work on this problem, as much better results have been achieved elsewhere.

For dyed-in-the-wool Golden Age fans this book is certainly a must. For comic fans used to the more sophisticated story and art standards of modern comics this is an interesting curiosity, no doubt, but probably a tossup at the price. **—A.S.**

STREET COMIX #1 (Rip Kirby);
STREET COMIX #2 (Flash Gordon);
Both are 60¢; 32 pages; 7" by 10"; Jerry Sinkovec, editor; color cover; order from: Street Enterprises / Box 255 / Menomonee Falls, Wis. 53031; newspaper strip reprint fanzines.

STREET COMIX #1—The strip-happy guys from Menomonee Falls have given us another of their no-frills, pick-size set of reprints from a classic strip. Rip Kirby, the intellectual, pipe-smoking detective, was Alex Raymond's last creation. Though this strip hasn't enjoyed the near-worshipful adulation peculiar to Raymond's Flash Gordon, I find it just as artistically valuable and more fun to read. Though not in the classic illustrator's style are here, of course: formal layout, light and shadow, gorgeous, leggy girls drawn from life. The storyline is a two-part story (August 26 through November 2, 1946) relates Rip's attempts to recover a deadly chemical warfare formula from a powerful mad man criminal. The strips were taken from King Features microfilms, and the reproduction varies and is disappointing overall. Still, the book is a worthwhile collection of Raymond art and detective action for six dimes. **—A.S.**

STREET COMIX #2—Too few comic fans know the FLASH GORDON newspaper strip of the 1950's, after its story line had changed from Ming and Mongo to pulp-style science fiction. More's the pity because for years the strip was a source of awesome pretty line art. At last **STREET COMIX** has remedied the situation by reprinting this 1952 Flash adventure.

The story, which involves Flash and his friends in a space-prison break, is really no great shakes. It's well-enough written, but little more than a crime story with some pretty tossed in. The magic of the strip is in the excellent artwork of Dan Barry, a long-time strip artist who has never gotten his deserved share of recognition. Maybe this book will change that, too. Barry's work shines, despite occasional lapses in printing clarity. Only problem: the blurb on the last page, "Watch for the exciting conclusion..." No telling how long we'll have to wait for that one. **—R.H.**

THUNDA, KING OF THE CONGO; $10.00; 32 pages; 9" by 12¾"; mailed in cardboard mailer; Russ Cochran, editor; color cover; order from editor Russ Cochran / Route One / Adel, Iowa 50003; Frazetta reprint fanzine.

Frazetta is a major name to comic fans. You have probably noticed that it turns up with alarming frequency in many of the reviews in this issue. That's because he's genuinely acknowledged as one of the best artists to ever draw comics and the presence of a mere sketch by Frank Frazetta is enough to double the sales of any zine.

But this book is not intended to cash in on that popularity. Rather, it is a sincere attempt to place the rarest of Frazetta comics (Thunda) in every comic that was drawn entirely, cover to cover, by him) within the price range of most collectors. The original 1952 comic is currently selling for about $100.

Not only is it a reprint of that entire comic, Russ' book is also destined to be assigned to the realm of art portfolios. Why? Well, the reproduction is done directly from the original art and printed on the best paper available. It is excellent and so far surpasses the quality of what one would see in the actual comic that these appear to be almost as if new renditions of the old drawings had been done. Fine lines and subtle shadings that were lost on the pulpy comic book paper spring to vivid life, unmuddied by coloring and poor printing. And it's half again as large as the comic book, so the detail that Frazetta is famous for is there to marvel at.

The story itself is based on a Tarzan-type character and the influence of Hal Foster's early **TARZAN** and **PRINCE VALIANT** strips is very apparent. Surprisingly enough, the stories still read well and are enjoyable, even by modern standards.

Still, this book is not for everyone. It was produced for the collector and might not be appreciated by someone who isn't a die-hard Frank Frazetta fan. If you are such a fan, then this is a must.

—J.V.

UNTAMED LOVE; $10.00; 32 pages; 9" by 12¾"; mailed in cardboard mailer; Russ Cochran, editor; color cover; order from: Russ Cochran / Route One / Adel, Iowa 50003; Frazetta reprint fanzine.

The subject matter of this latest big, ritzy Russ Cochran reprint—four 1950's romance strips illustrated by Frank Frazetta. The portfolio-sized book, printed on heavy stock with a slick full-color cover, is undoubtedly the best presentation Frazetta's comic work has seen. For the Fritz fan, there's nothing to say but put down your ten bucks. For those who (like this reviewer) have never understood what all the fuss was about Frazetta, the illustrations in this book may win grudging admiration even from them. As for the fan artists, these 32 pages of flashy draftsmanship will probably provide enough swipes for the next decade.

A word of advice, though: If you're a script fancier, forget it. The stories are uniformly awful. Just look at the pictures. **—R.H.**

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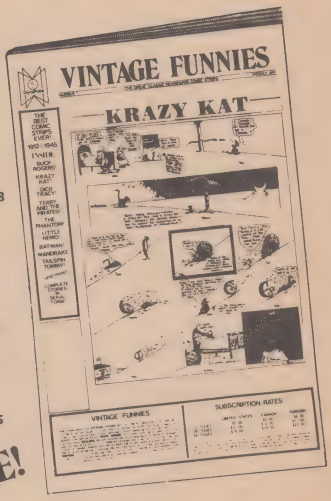

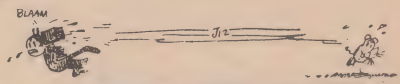

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VIEWPOINTS

Why I'm on Strike Against National

by Neal Adams,
as told to Doug Murray

Only days after it was learned over 1900 pages of original artwork was missing from National Periodical Publications, Neal Adams announced he was going on strike against National. He said he would no longer work for the company—until and unless National began returning originals to the artists.

Adams, whose work is highly valued on the originals market, is president of The Academy of Comic Book Artists (ACBA). A goodly portion of the missing material was drawn by Adams—much of it for the GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW "drug" books.

INSIDE COMICS correspondent Doug Murray was told by Adams about his strike and his feelings in general about the theft.

As far as I'm concerned, the theft of art from National's files is a direct result of their keeping artwork that does not rightfully belong to them. It has also convinced me I should not work for the company until changes in their policy are made.

The comic companies, and National Periodicals in particular, have always argued ambiguously and at great length about the ownership of original comic book art. At various times, they have insisted the artist will eventually get his artwork back. At other times, they have argued the artwork belongs to the company that purchased the publication rights. On still other occasions, the companies have said they aren't really sure who owns the material.

In short, they've always given spurious reasons for keeping the artwork they once returned, gave away, threw out or tore up.

The only conclusion I could ever reach on the topic was that the companies—since they were already in physical possession of the artwork—have been acting as custodians of the artwork. But only until a final judgment on ownership could be reached. Even if that was so, however, the 1900 missing pages amply show that the companies are incapable of even that job.

I have never really believed that 1) the companies actually owned the art, or 2) they should be in the business of keeping artwork. Comic companies are in the business of producing comic books, **not** collecting and owning artwork, **not** to sell artwork and **not** to be exhibitors of artwork.

Their sole function is to produce and sell comic books. And since that is their sole business, once a comic book page has been copied for use, the original page has absolutely no further reproductive value to them and should be returned.

On the other hand, original artwork is worth something to the creator and to the collector. And since that page is worth something over and above its reproductive value, the comic companies are treating the artists unfairly by not paying them when they retain artwork. If the companies want to keep artwork after they have reproduced it, they should offer to compensate the artist. They are then keeping artwork for art's sake, not reproduction's sake, and the artist should be recompensed. They've only paid the artist for the reproduction rights (as outlined on the artist's pay check), not the ownership rights.

At this time, ACBA has no policy or position. But according to a survey of members, ACBA feels as I do. They feel that artwork belongs to an artist and not to the companies. They believe that if the companies lose original artwork, they owe the creator payment for losing his property.

And while ACBA has no official policy, I have personally taken action against National. I feel I must do something about the situation, no matter how small my act might be.

I am conducting a one-man strike against National Periodical Publications. In simple language, I am refusing to produce material for National until they agree that the artwork belongs to the creator; or until they agree to return the artwork to its creator until a legal judgment can be made on the subject. And until either or both of those conditions are met, I will not be working for National as a free-lance comic book artist.

I'm also receiving a certain amount of sympathy from other artists and writers. Some people are avoiding National because they now feel they were getting unfair treatment or can get a better deal with another company.

Others are declining National assignments on a separate, but related, premise: that if comic book pages are salable as artwork, its basic value is greater than simple reproduction material. In other words, if National pays an artist $65 per page to reproduce his artwork, and then the creator can re-sell his artwork for an additional $35 per page, the real value of the page is $100, not $65. So if National wants to reproduce and retain the art, they should be paying $100 per page. Or pay $65 and return the originals, so that the artist may sell the page as art to another, non-competing market.

In summary, if National wants to reproduce and retain an artist's work, they should pay the creator for both conditions. At this juncture, National is retaining and reproducing, but is only paying to reproduce. Thus, when the material was stolen, National lost material that belonged to the creator and they should reimburse the creator for the loss.

It would be foolish for an artist—who has a home, a car and a family to support like anyone else—to continue working for National when they are only receiving partial payment for their work. Marvel has implemented a new plan to return artwork to its creator. Which means, in reality, that National is paying lower rates than Marvel.

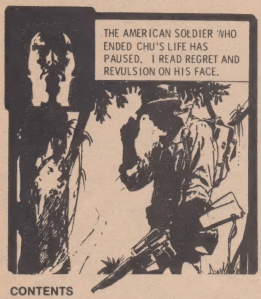
If an artist has to choose between National—which offers only payment—and Marvel—which offers payment and return of material for later resale—he will almost always choose Marvel.

This very sound rationale is taking the quality free-lance comic people away from National. I believe that National should return the original material to the creator after they have used the material to the extent of their payment. If they only pay to reproduce art, they should not be allowed to keep the art, too.

By returning the artwork, National would also save money. Money now spent to store the artwork. Money now spent on employing security people to guard the artwork. They would also raise the morale of their staff employees, who are now under constant suspicion of being original art "thieves."

But until such time as National changes their original artwork policy, I will not work for that company. I suspect that you will find an increasingly large number of free-lance artists doing the same thing. □

PHASE MAGAZINE



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Dragon Slayer
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THE LAST WORD

Fat Freddy doesn't read comic books anymore. But he did once.

In fact, I still remember how we'd spend hours comparing our collections. We couldn't have been more than eight or nine years old, but we'd spend hours at his house reading and trading comic books.

He had this giant, wooden chest with spindly legs, and he'd keep all his comics there. For some reason, all I ever had was an old, brown schoolbag. It messed up the comics something awful.

We really loved comic books then. He was especially fond of **JIMMY OLSEN** and **SUPERMAN**. I only used to read **FLASH, GREEN LANTERN** and **THE JUSTICE LEAGUE.**

Fat Freddy's older brother was a Marvel fan. He'd read only Marvels, just like we'd read only DC comics. Fat Freddy's brother kept all his comic books in the garage, and every once in a while we'd sneak a peek. All I ever remembered was how funny Marvel's books looked—they had all those dumb blurbs on the bottom of every page. And damn if every one of their pages didn't have color running over the panels.

Perhaps our greatest day was when Fat Freddy had a letter printed in **METAMORPHO**. It was one of those "Hey, I really dig Rexy and his girl, but get rid of Staggsy and Java" letters. But that was important back then.

Getting your name in a comic book was something big. Like hitting a home run with a Pensy Pinkie ball instead of a spaldeen.

As years went by, things changed. Fat Freddy stopped reading comic books and he even stopped playing stickball.

Fat Freddy's older brother grew up faster than all of us, it seemed. He was the first guy to get to high school and he threw out all his Marvels.

Then Fat Freddy and his brother moved from the neighborhood. Then my parents and I moved, too. I didn't see Fat Freddy for over ten years.

A couple of days ago, however, I ran into Fat Freddy. He's working at the Fulton Fish Market now, and he said he likes it. We talked for a while as he cleaned some striped bass, then we went into one of those real Irish-looking bars on South Street. We drank some and we talked a lot.

We talked about how we eventually got into different things. He into fish markets and me into reporting. About all the girls from the old neighborhood we hadn't seen in years. About Fat Freddy's brother and the nuns from the elementary school. We even talked a little about comics.

"You know, I bought a comic book the other day," said Fat Freddy. "I was in the old neighborhood and bought one from Moe's Candy Stores. Remember Moe, man? He was a great guy. Always gave me free comic books."

"Moe threw me out one day after I asked him for a copy of **FANTASY MASTERPIECES #1**," I said.

"No kidding? How come?"

"I dunno," I said. "I think he was pissed off because I would go into a different store to buy the comic books he didn't carry. He never got **BLACKHAWK** or **SHOWCASE**, remember? But I never went back in there after that day."

"No shit? Not even for a stickball bat?"

"Nope," I laughed.

"Well, I bought that comic, you know—Moe ain't there no more, got a heart attack or something—and it was called **PREZ** or something. It was rotten."

"The comic book?"

"Nah," said Fat Freddy somberly. "All the comics. I looked at every one of them. What the hell happened, man? They're all rotten. And what ever happened to Metamorpho?"

"I think he's in some comic book again," I said. "But they had killed him off for a real long time. Staggsy, too."

"No shit? That's too bad."

Fat Freddy looked around and it was late. He called to the bartender, but I beat him and shoved a fiver towards the cash register.

"Nah, it's on the house for Freddy," said the bartender. "Anyway my wife says thanks for the clam sauce."

Fat Freddy nodded a little and hiked himself up off the high, wooden stool. "Listen, man, I gotta get back to work."

"Good to see you," I said.

"Damn straight. Take it easy, eh Branc? And listen, you got my phone number. Give me a call when the comics get good again. Okay?"

"Sure," I heard myself say. "As soon as everything gets good again."

"Great," said Fat Freddy. "But I ain't gonna hold my breath waiting for the call."

Fat Freddy was always a smart guy.

—Joe Brancatelli

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I collect military Blackhawk WDC&S Donald Duck and other send wants and what you have WSA 331. Roger Hill, Box 416, Essex, IA 51638.

Ohio fans can contract CLAAP (Cleveland Association of Amateur Publishers), the APA (Amateur Press Association) magazine. Send dotto or 1oz copy, Edward C. Learner, 2366 Wyandotte Ave., CFO, 44223.

Anybody in the Provo to Salt Lake area who wants to trade or sell comics contact Jim Kearney, 665 N. 2nd E., American Fork, Utah 84003.

Desire information & bibliographies on comic books as a myth form. Marks, 1505 Duke U. Rd. #3-K, Durham, N.C. 27701.

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